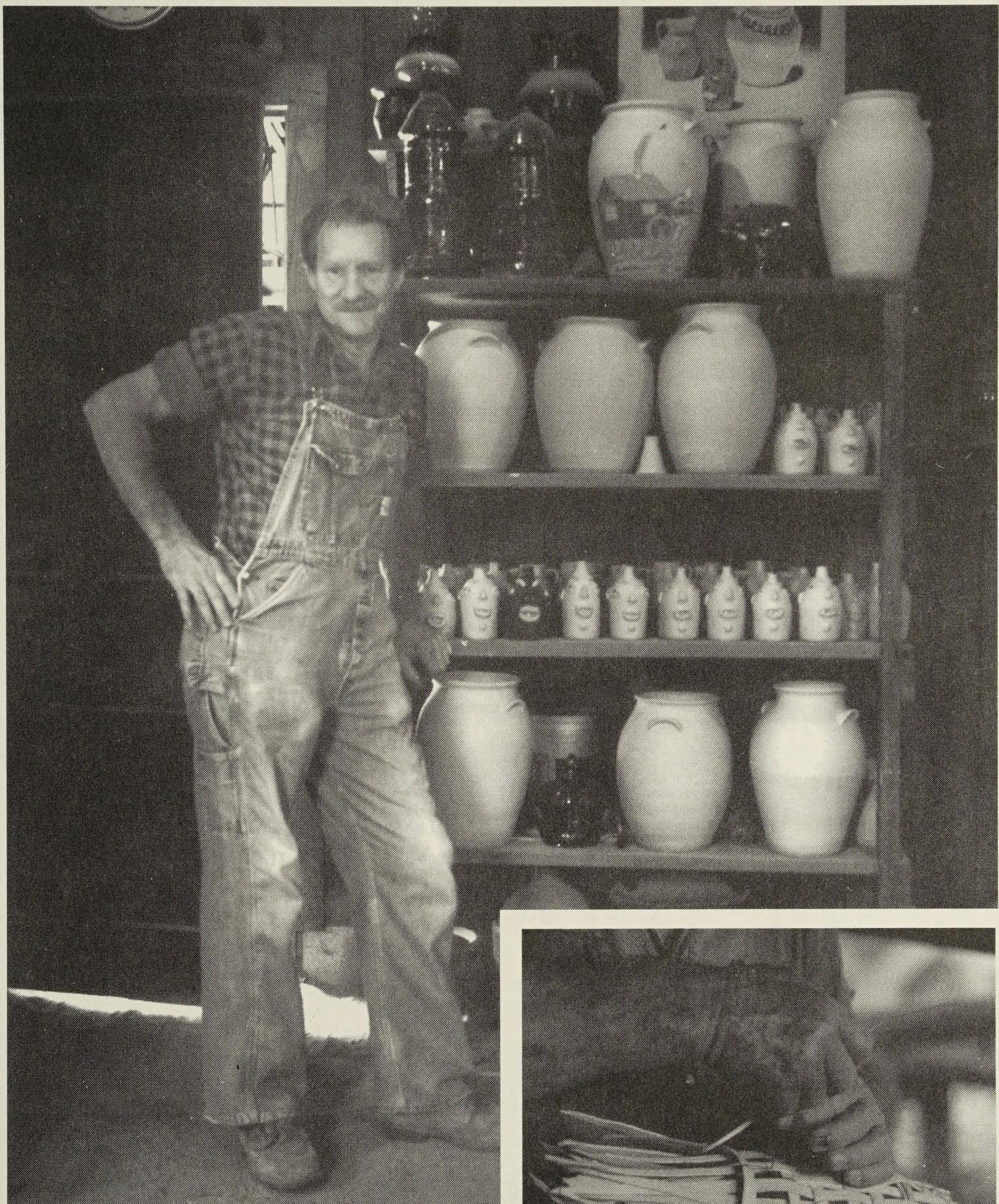


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Folklore Journal



*Focus on
South Carolina*



North Carolina Folklore Journal

Karen Baldwin, Editor

Brian Perry, Assistant Editor

Ingrid Vernon, Assistant Editor

Michael Schinasi, Spanish language consultant

The North Carolina Folklore Journal is published twice a year by the North Carolina Folklore Society with the assistance of East Carolina University and a grant from the North Carolina Arts Council, a state agency.

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The *North Carolina Folklore Journal* publishes studies of North Carolina folklore and folklife, analyses of folklore in Southern literature, and articles whose rigorous methodology or innovative approach is pertinent to local folklife study. Manuscripts should conform to *The MLA Style Manual*. Quotations from oral narratives should be transcriptions of spoken texts and should be identified by teller, place, and date. Submit article queries and manuscripts to Karen Baldwin, Editor, NCFJ, ECU Folklore Archive, English Department, Bate Bldg. 2215, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC 27858-4353.

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Focus on South Carolina

Dedicated to Billy Walker Henson, 1941-2001

1	Greetings from the Guest Editors: South Carolina Welcomes Y'all <i>Stephen Criswell & John Michael Coggshall</i>
4	Sharing Traditions: Keynote Address to the South Carolina Traditional Arts Network First Annual Conference on Folklore, Folklife, and Traditional Arts <i>Charles Joyner</i>
14	The Cement Sculpture Aesthetic: A Photo Essay <i>Fran Gardner Perry</i>
22	Face Vessels and Contemporary South Carolina Folk Pottery <i>Paul Matheny</i>
28	About Fishing, Making Split Oak Baskets, and Other Affairs of Everyday Life: The McKinley Family of Anderson, South Carolina <i>Gale McKinley</i>
37	Creativity and Ingenuity on the Mill Hill: Reflections on Cotton Mill Toys and Other Objects <i>Don Roper</i>
47	“Come Along, Let’s Ride This Train”: Santee River Testimonies, Praises, and Songs <i>Vennie Deas-Moore</i>

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59 Bluegrass Passion: South Carolina Traditional Music
Advocates Jennings and Willie Chestnut,
Guy and Tina Faulk
Michelle Ross

68 In Search of the Frog's Raccoon
Julia Arrants

80 South Carolina Hash: By the Light of the Moon
Saddler Taylor

88 Let Every Morsel Be Good to You: Reflections on
My South Carolina Food Traditions
Ervena Faulkner

92 Taquería El Perico: Mexican Food and Identity in
Columbia, South Carolina
Craig Stinson

102 Taquería El Perico: la comida mexicana y la identidad en
Colombia, Carolina del Sur
traducción por Michael Schinasi e Ingrid Vernon

110 Cultural Tourism in South Carolina
Lisa Randle

116 Contributors

Greetings from the Guest Editors: South Carolina Welcomes Y'all

~ *Stephen Criswell & John Michael Coggeshall*

This photograph was taken by Craig Stinson, folklorist for the South Carolina Arts Commission, on one of his many trips from Wilmington back to Columbia. The welcome sign was modified by an anonymous resident who used duct tape to transform a generic state-line highway sign into an expression of regional identity and a more appropriate greeting to our visitors from the north. Taking our cue from this culturally sensitive vandal, we welcome y'all to this special South Carolina focus issue of the *North Carolina Folklore Journal*.



The idea for this issue began in November of 1999, when representatives from the fledgling South Carolina Traditional Arts Network, seeking assistance with plans to develop their email discussion group into a formal organization, met with the North Carolina Folklore Society board. A partnership between North Carolina's long-established organization and the emerging South Carolina group was soon forged. This partnership resulted in a flood of South Carolinians joining the North Carolina Folklore Society, the appointment of a South Carolina liaison to the North Carolina Folklore Society board, the expansion of the *NCFS Newsletter* to include both Carolinas, and last but not least, this issue you now hold in your hands.

This issue does not mark the first appearance of South Carolina or its folk traditions in the pages of the *NCFJ*. The recently published *Comprehensive Index* (46.1-2, 1999) notes nearly a dozen articles focused on or making reference to South Carolina with pieces on Low-country tales, Sea Island music, and "root stories," among others. However, South Carolina traditions appear to have been absent from the *Journal* for over two decades. Hopefully, this issue will mark the return of essays on South Carolina folklore and folklife to this publication.



The editors of this special issue were given a unique opportunity and challenge—to capture in a single collection the diversity of South Carolina's traditional cultures. From the beginning of this project, our goals were to compile a wide variety of essays documenting and examining a broad range of topics and, whenever possible, to offer the reader direct access to the voices of traditional artists and tradition bearers themselves. The papers in this collection examine a range of South Carolina traditions from a variety of perspectives, including those of academically trained folklorists, educators, community scholars, and traditional artists.

Folklorist Charles Joyner opens this collection with a reminder that the traditions of this state represent a synthesis of African, Native American, and European cultures, and thus stand as a metaphor for an ideal social integration. Art professor Fran Perry's photographs of the Bethune Pottery yard, a local provider of materials for a myriad of yard artists in the region, suggest an intersection of "found art" and folk art from a perspective informed by the disciplines of both folklore and fine arts. More traditional arts are then examined by South Carolina State Museum Art Curator Paul Matheny, who offers a discussion of traditional pottery, particularly face vessels, in the state.

2 Gale McKinley, herself an artist, describes her family's tradition of split-oak basketmaking, interweaving the history of her tradition with the history of her family. Don Roper discusses traditional crafts from a different source, the mill, and reminisces about toys from his childhood—toys made from technological cast-offs. Also drawing upon her childhood recollections, Vennie Deas-Moore takes us to the Low-country to describe contemporary shouts in her African American coastal community. Michelle Ross then describes a European American bluegrass venue in the Pee Dee region, examining the social importance of this musical art form. Jumping to another musical tradition is Julia Arrants, who critically examines a common folk song, "Froggie Went A-Courtin'," and its manifestations in South Carolina.

Saddler Taylor then examines versions of a different sort—variations on the tradition of hash-making in the state. Expanding on food traditions, Ervena Faulkner draws upon her favorite memories to describe the social importance of foods in her family. Craig Stinson spices traditional South Carolina foods with flavors from Mexico, reminding



us of the increasing importance of Latinos in our state. Finally, with an awareness of the diversity reflected in South Carolina's variety of folk traditions, Lisa Randle notes the critical importance of cultural preservation, both for the sake of tourism and for the maintenance of the state's cultural diversity.

While certainly diverse, this collection of essays nevertheless does not include some significant South Carolina traditions, such as sweet grass basket-making. We also wish we had papers on Native American cultures, especially from "insiders" themselves. We have some essays on African American traditions but recognize the typical emphasis on coastal black traditions rather than those from other regions. We also acknowledge the paucity of papers devoted to emergent traditions in the state, especially from Hispanics, South Asians, and other more recent additions. However, despite the limitations, we hope that this volume serves as a stimulus to these other groups and other tradition-bearers to enhance and invigorate our initial collection with an even greater representation of the true cultural diversity within the state. We eagerly await more articles. In the meantime, we invite you to enjoy the return of South Carolina folklore and folklife to the pages of the *North Carolina Folklore Journal*.

The guest editors would like to thank the members of the NCFS board for their encouragement of this project. Thanks to Clemson University, Benedict College, the South Carolina Humanities Council, and the South Carolina Arts Commission—especially Craig Stinson and Lisa Randle. Thanks to Samantha McCluney-Criswell for her editorial assistance.

Editor Karen Baldwin, Assistant Editors Brian Perry and Ingrid Vernon, and Michael Schinasi, the *NCFJ* Spanish language consultant, have worked long and hard in shaping the final contents and design for this special issue, "Focus on South Carolina." Thanks to them for the Spanish translation of Stinson's article on Taquería El Perico. The cover and interior designs are Karen Baldwin's work, and all the *Journal* staff at ECU checked sources and spellings and did everything they could to make this volume a success. We thank them for their patience and expertise.



Sharing Traditions

4

*Keynote Address to the
South Carolina
Traditional Arts Network
First Annual Conference on
Folklore, Folklife, and
Traditional Arts*

~ Charles Joyner

Burroughs Distinguished Professor
of Southern History and Culture
at Coastal Carolina University

I got into folklore because I wanted to be a better historian. I wanted to understand history better than I understood it at the time. And two great historians led me to that better understanding. First, was C. Vann Woodward, who said that the South's defining characteristics are rooted in its historical experience, which meant I had to look at the past and what had been developed over time. Woodward's friend, David Potter, based the South's claim to a distinctive tradition on what he called the culture of the folk. He said Woodward's theory was true as far as it went, but it didn't take into consideration the culture within which that past was experienced. I never got to know David Potter. I remember seeing him at the Southern Historical Association a few times at a distance. I remember I was just a few people ahead of him at a checkout line at the hotel once at the end of the Southern Historical Association and had an instinct for a second to go back and shake his hand, but I thought, "No, that's corny." So I didn't go back to shake hands with David Potter and within a few months he had died. He was only fifty-two years old.

Late in his life, I became close friends with C. Vann Woodward. He had already outlived two generations of his friends, and in his eighties and early nineties, we became quite close. And I have tried to build on what I think of as the wisdom of C. Vann Woodward and David Potter and the way their ideas intersected over the course of my career. To understand the interplay of history and folk culture in southern history, each gives insight into the other. I knew more about history than I did about folklore when I started this, but I did know enough about folklore to know that what folklorists did was make field trips.

So, pretty early in my career, about 1961 or '62, I made my first field trip. I was in Watauga County, North Carolina, going around a crooked mountain, so crooked that I could see my own taillights as I came around a curve. And this car came roaring around a curve and almost ran me off the road. I could look down about two miles there. And it was a woman driver! She yelled out the window at me, "Pig!" Now, this was 1961 or '62. You have to understand that my consciousness was not raised very much in those days, and her yelling really made me mad. So I jammed my car into low gear and spun my wheels around the curve, and I almost ran into the pig she was trying to warn me about. But I kept going until I got up to the top of the mountain, and there



was this old, run down cabin up there. And it really looked deserted. I mean, there wasn't any smoke coming out of the chimney. There weren't any animals in the pen. There weren't any crops in the clearing. But there was this long, lean fellow sitting on the porch, and he got up slowly and ambled over to the car. And I had read what a folklorist is supposed to do in a situation like this. Now I knew I was supposed to establish rapport. And I tried to engage the gentleman in conversation, and he didn't seem to know anything. He didn't know who won the World Series; he didn't know who won the war. Finally, I was desperate, and I said, "It must be hard to get the necessities of life up here, isn't it?" And he says, "Stranger, it is for a fact. And sometimes when you get it, it ain't fit to drink." Well, I thought I had myself a real "folk."

What I did not know was that he was having his little sport with me. His name was Frank Proffitt. I know it sounds vaguely commercial, but he really *was* a "folk"—in the sense that he was a genuine tradition-bearer. He was born in that house, but he didn't live there by 1961. He'd built himself a little better one a little further down the mountain. Frank had a sixth grade formal education. He had to walk four miles each way to get that. If he wanted to go further in school, he'd have to walk all the way down the mountain into Boone to go to high school, which wasn't so bad in the morning, but he'd have to walk all the way back up the mountain—15 miles each way. But the man had a brilliant mind. He knew enough to live in harmony with his environment and not destroy it in the process. He was a great singer, and a great collector of songs. He realized the intrinsic beauty and value of these old traditional songs. And he was a great craftsman. He built a beautiful mountain dulcimer and fretless banjo for me.

And he knew enough to teach a wet-behind-the-ears graduate student how to study folklore and how to think about history. Frank Proffitt became my first, perhaps my best, folklore professor and in some ways perhaps my best history professor, too. Once he told me, "Chaz, it seems to me you historians go at things kind of backwards." And I said, "How's that Frank?" He said, "Well, you're always writing about the first this and the first that. You're interested in stuff that's new and shiny. If it ever happens again, you don't write about it, you don't care about it, only when it's new and shiny." Well, that wasn't exactly what I thought I'd been doing—or what I thought most historians did—but it was a



might too close for comfort. Frank reached into his pocket and pulled out this old, beat-up knife that looked like he had been rubbing it against rocks for two or three hundred years. He said, "Now if I had a new knife, and lost it, I could get another new knife. But if I lost *this* knife, it would be gone forever. And things don't get to be old for no reason at all. It's what endures that counts, not what changes." Well, that statement was life changing for me. It changed the way that I looked at history, and it changed the course of my professional career. Of course I continue to believe that change is important. But as long as there are some other historians studying change, I want to study what endures. Frank Proffitt convinced me that endurance truly is what really matters.

Through Frank Proffitt I met other people very much like him. His cousin Stanley Hicks, for instance, almost as wise, but he was even wittier. Frank died in 1965, but Stanley lived on until the 1980s, long enough for them to get telephones up there on his mountain. And I would stay in touch with him by telephone. One January I remember that they had been snowed in for about two weeks on his mountain. The Red Cross had been taking supplies in by helicopter. And I called to see how he was doing. It took a while before they had phone service restored, and I eventually got him, and he said, "Well, we hadn't seen a living soul in two weeks, and we were sitting there by the fire when I heard a knock at the door. A man said, 'I'm from the Red Cross!' I told him, 'Well, we'd sure would like to help you'uns out, but we've had a hard winter!'"

17

Frank's wit reminded me of our landlord when I was a youngster in Myrtle Beach—Casper Benton, who claimed to be the first man in Horry county ever to vote in the second grade. When he said that, we laughed, thinking that was the punch line. And Mr. Casper paused with a timing Bob Hope would have envied and hit us with the *real* punch line: "Of course, I wasn't supposed to be in the second grade; I was supposed to be in the third grade!" And we laughed again, and he paused again, and then hit us with the *really* real punch line: "But they wouldn't let me be in the same grade as my daddy!"

There were two elderly African Americans, unlettered geniuses in the same way—with little formal education but brilliant minds—who taught true folk wisdom. Sarah Geathers, born a slave on a rice plantation, revealed the meaning of life. Some people pay gurus millions of dollars



and travel to Tibet or the end of the world to learn this, but I'll share it with you for free: "You live and learn, and you die and forget 'em all. Yes, Jesus." And Walter Geathers, the unofficial mayor of Carver Street, taught me many things when I worked for the street department of the town of Myrtle Beach, but none more useful in my present line of work than his aphorism that, "If you ain't got education, you have to use your brain."

Folk culture is universal, but it is not universally alike. The best illustration that I know of about how important context is to the meaning of culture has to do with a trial I heard about or read about in Horry County. I guess it was back in the 1930s. This sharecropper had been hit by a Cadillac—his mule and wagon and himself. He had been injured, and his wagon had been destroyed, and his mule had been killed. And he was trying to recover some damages from the owner of the Cadillac. The lawyer for the owner of the Cadillac was trying to cast doubt on whether he was really injured, and, therefore, whether he really deserved recompense for this. He asked the sharecropper, "Well isn't it true that on the evening of the accident, you told an investigating officer you were feeling fine?" And he said, "Well I was just going down the road with my mule and wagon, not bothering anybody; and this big Cadillac come a-roaring around the curve and...and ran right into us...." "I didn't ask you all that, I just asked you isn't it true that you told the investigating officer on the very evening of the accident that you were feeling fine?" "Well, I was getting to that. I was just going down the road with my mule and wagon, not bothering anybody; and this Cadillac come a-roaring around the curve and ran right into us, knocked me one side of the road, and the mule and wagon the other side. And the investigating officer, he got out and went to the mule first. And he looked at him and said, 'Oh, he's in a bad way, I'll put him out of his misery.' And he pulled out his pistol and shot my mule right between the eyes. Then he turned to me and said, 'How you feeling?'" Context, always remember context.

My family and I spent one summer on an extended field trip in Newfoundland, that big island off the east coast of Canada, where I was trying to record ballad singers. (At least it was the months we *called* summer. Newfoundland only has July 14th and winter.) We lived in Laurinburg, North Carolina, at the time, and by the time we got as far



as Portland, Maine, I realized we were only halfway there. I thought that after Portland you just sailed off the end of the earth. But Newfoundland is one hundred miles out to sea. It is five hundred miles across, and people don't go *through* Newfoundland on the way to someplace else. Newfoundlanders rarely see strangers. A Newfoundland outport is a good example of what anthropologists would call a *Gemeinshaft* community, where everybody in town sees everybody else face-to-face every day. Nobody locks doors in Newfoundland. Nobody even knocks on doors in Newfoundland. Everybody's front parlor looks like everybody else's. Newfoundlanders bring their kids up saying, "If you don't behave yourself, the *stranger* will come and take you away." None of this stuff about the Boogerman or Tall Betsy; it is "the strangers will come and take you away." So what happens when I drive into this little Newfoundland outport and want to record a ballad singer? My mother tried to teach me to have good manners, and by the standards of my own culture I behaved appropriately. I got out of the car and walked up on the porch and knocked on the door. How was I to know it would be like announcing, "I've come for the kids!"?

Sometimes the context helped my fieldwork. I made several field trips to Scotland in the early 1970s, recording ballad singers, looking at some of the roots of southern music. There are lots of roots of southern music. And I was recording this woman in the Orkney Isles named Ethel Findlater. She was in her late seventies, and she had been widowed when she was in her mid-forties. She had run her farm on a very self-sufficient basis for thirty years. But now her children were grown, and her grandchildren were teenagers. They were taking care of the farm, and she had become just "Granny." She was not important anymore. But when I came to record her, she gathered her children and grandchildren around and said, "Look, this man came 3000 miles to hear me sing!" Just by being from "off," I conferred *status* on her, status that, of course, really had nothing to do with me. Being the stranger in one context, I was the bad guy; in this other context, I was the good guy. In both cases I was just doing the best I could. The context was what accounted for the different results.

One of the important things I learned from another singer, though, is just how *localized* some of these contexts can be. I was teaching at this point at St. Andrews Presbyterian College in Laurinburg, North Carolina,



and on one of these trips to Scotland, I had about a dozen of my students with me. We were in a village called Fetterangus in Aberdeenshire. Fetterangus is a tiny town with stores down just one side of the street, and houses just down one side of the street. It was only one story at what they call the bottom of the street. There wasn't a television antenna in the town. There were more great ballad singers and storytellers in that village of Fetterangus than there are ghosts at Pawleys Island. And we were recording Miss Lucy Stewart, who seemed to know more ballads than anybody I ever knew. When she would get tired of singing, she would rest up by telling a story. About midday, the postman came by. That day it was a substitute postman, and she stopped to chat with him. She asked where he came from, and he said he was from Strichen. Now we knew that Strichen was just nine miles away. We had filled up our van with petrol there the day before. When I tell you her answer, I want you to think about someplace roughly nine miles away from where you grew up, and consider the cultural meaning of her answer: She said, "Aye, I kent by yer tongue you're nae from these parts" [I knew by your accent, by the way you speak, that you're not from around here.] And that struck a chord with me, certainly. I grew up in Myrtle Beach. I could always tell a Georgetonian from an Horryite. I could not have explained how. I didn't know why, but I always recognized them. I didn't miss.

I finally understood that afternoon in Fetterangus that this was a universal phenomenon. It was the effort to figure out why that was so, to learn why that was so, that led me to write *Down by the Riverside*. That little glimmer of possibility happened not while I was home among these things that I had taken for granted for so long, but I had to be off somewhere to realize that there was something interesting, a fascinating puzzle to ponder right in my own backyard. And of course the answer to the puzzle of why Georgetonians had a different accent had to do with crops, and it had to do with demographics, and it had to do with Africa. It had to do with a lot of things that I did not know and had to learn. But it was fascinating and I wrote a book about it called *Down by the Riverside*. It got enough recognition that, since then, I've been invited to run my mouth on the South on every inhabited continent, from Brazil to Beijing, from Dakar to Denmark, even down in the real deep south, in Australia and New Zealand.



In 1989, I was in a conference in what was then known as Yugoslavia. It was obvious that the country was coming apart, and I asked some of my new Croat friends, "Aren't you afraid you're going to destroy the union?" They said, "Well, we certainly hope so. That's the general idea." And I said, "You know, we ought to talk about this some, because I'm from South Carolina and we've had some experience with this." I said, "I come from a whole state of secessionists and I've been studying secession's causes and consequences for most of my adult life and I have to tell you, I don't see a lot to recommend it. You might be in for some trouble."

I have been unusually fortunate in a lot of different kinds of experiences, so I tried to sort out what I learned from all of this in my latest book *Shared Traditions*. It has an overview of the forms of folklore in the South—folk speech and proverbs; folktales, ballads, and songs; legends, customs, and folk belief; wonderful pottery, baskets, and needlework; and other folk arts. I look at the folklore and folklife of certain folk groups, the culture created by the slaves on the plantations, the fascinating blend of assimilation and cultural preservation among southern Jews, the traditional dulcimer makers of the North Carolina mountains, the development of southern music—the spirituals and gospel music, the blues, jazz from New Orleans to Coltrane, country music, rock—and, finally, the endangered traditions of Gullah culture as the sea islands are developed into resorts for the very rich. I'm not as pessimistic about the future of Gullah culture as some folks are. It is endangered, but it is not a fragile culture. It is a culture that was created under the harshest conditions you can imagine. But all of the answers aren't in, and I can only hope I'm not wrong.

I want to close by reading one short passage out of *Shared Traditions* about what made southern culture:

Out of the convergence of African and European traditions, so different yet so alike, emerged a new southern folk culture, a folk culture with both an African and a European heritage yet as different from either as water is from hydrogen and oxygen. I believe that the sharing of cultural traditions in the South is more responsible than any other single factor for the extraordinary richness of southern culture. The new synthesis has been a dynamic, evolving tradition, deeply affected by the



ideals, frustrations, anxieties, and hopes of all the southern people by whom it was created.

Central to the richness of southern folk culture has been racial integration, but it was not obvious for a long time. One reason was that earlier folklorists, conceptualizing their task as the preservation of “cultural survivals,” sought “purest” survivals of European and African traditions. Thus ballad collectors went to the Appalachians or the Ozarks, and spiritual collectors went to the Sea Islands or the Black Belt. Other southerners, black or white, were free to sing without fear of being interrupted by strangers with notebooks or microphones. Another reason it was not obvious was that the white elite—the so-called “leaders” of the white South—spent a great deal of time, money, and energy in an effort to create and maintain a racially segregated society. But, like Huck and Jim on their raft, black and white folk southerners recognized that they were in the same boat. They continued to swap recipes and cultural styles, songs and stories, accents and attitudes. Folk culture simply refused to abide by any color line, however rigidly it might have been drawn.

Unlike other reported explanations of southern identity, folklife rests upon the shared cultural past of all southerners, rather than upon that of white southerners alone. “The black Southerner and the white Southerner are locked to the land and the history,” the novelist Maya Angelou says, “a painful history of guilt and cruelty and ignorance. It clings to us like the moss on the trees.” Jack Burden, the aptly named protagonist of Robert Penn Warren’s *All the King’s Men*, tells “how if you could not accept the past and its burden there was no future, for without one, there cannot be the other, and how, if you could accept the past you might hope for the future, for only out of the past can you make the future.” The history of the South’s racially mixed folk culture offers southerners a different perspective from which we might, if [we] will, understand and accept their past. The American South was multicultural from its very beginnings. “Our cultural patterns are an amalgam of black and white. Our destinies are tied together,” declared Martin Luther King, Jr. “Somewhere along the way the two must join together, black



and white together, we shall overcome, and I still believe it." From that vantage point, the great tradition of southern folklife has a special contribution to make to the region's future. (24, 25)

Five or six years ago, I had an experience that I did not understand until recently. I was in Brazil—not in Rio de Janeiro or Sao Paolo, but a thousand miles inland at a place called Manaus. About four miles north of Manaus, two rivers come together. One is a clearwater river called the Rio Solimos, that comes down out of the mountains of Nicaragua. The other is the Rio Negro, a blackwater river like the Waccamaw in my part of the state. When these two rivers intersect, they don't mix at first; they go along for two or three miles, side by side, just right together. I have videotape of myself on a boat going back and forth across this place where there is the clearwater river and the blackwater river side by side. After two or three miles, they merge. And when they do, they form the mightiest river in the world, the Amazon. That, I now understand, is a powerful metaphor for southern culture.

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Green-eyed alligator with birdgirl



All photos by Fran Perry; images are computer-enhanced.

The Cement Sculpture Ästhetic: A Photo Essay

— *Fran Gardner Perry*

Twenty identical bulldogs, eyes wide, stand guard over monolithic welcoming lighthouses. Sixteen Buddhas, breasts upon bellies, are frozen for eternity in jolly laughter. Pigs and lions exist in harmony like Edward Hicks's 1834 painting, *Peaceable Kingdom*. Modest Venuses; immodest Neptunes; prayerful, winged angels; and reverent Greek goddesses form a silent but persistent parade flanked by horned stags on one side and scalloped birdbaths on the other. These are not images from my surrealist fantasies. They exist, very much like this description, in a land called Bethune (Bethune, South Carolina, that is).

The Bethune Pottery has been in operation for 20 years and is owned and operated by Leroy and Joyce Stephens.¹ I suppose the very odd juxtaposition of objects and ornaments, mythical and magical, cartoonish and coquettish, is what enticed me to this fantastic world to begin with. Here is plethora of objects waiting to be chosen from the masses and carefully placed in yards both near and far, making the pottery a primary source of materials for "yard artists" of the region. One might look at the Bethune Pottery yard and presume the objects are placed randomly in the display area. This area, covered abundantly in fine white sand and moderately in tufts of grass, is directly in front of the facility where the objects are poured into the cement molds. The objects are taken from the molds and generously displayed on the "lawn," in full view of travelers on Route 1. But within the random placement of objects in this fantastic world of cement are order, pattern, and objective; the images of this photo essay lend proof.

My MFA trained artist's eye wishes to find order in the seemingly random. In my own work, I take an assortment of loosely related materials—wood, paint, fabric, thread, beads, and small objects—and give them order. The result is a cohesive and expressive work of art. Can we look at the Bethune Pottery yard the same way?



Madonna of the birdbath

These loosely related objects, when framed by the photographer, share a space within the border and a relationship is born. But I didn't place the objects; I only framed and photographed them. The objects at the Bethune Pottery were photographed exactly as they were displayed on the day that I was there in early May 2001.²

Ranging from giant mushrooms, to whimsical alligators, to classical Greek and Renaissance knockoffs, cement sculpture doesn't lack in variety. The isolated or grouped figures placed in the backyard garden convey a certain message about the "yard artist." Though collections may contain similar items (who doesn't have or want a bird girl?!), they are as unique as the individual collector, for placement and choice are critical to a distinctive presentation. But when viewed en masse at the cement yard, the message is much altered. For example, the reproduction of Michelangelo's *David* in my backyard flower garden reflects my own interest in honoring an artist whose impact on Western art is undeniable. However, when multiple, identical copies of *David* are among the other sculptures at the cement yard, they appear engaged in conversation with their concrete acquaintances. They have a relationship to one another that isn't present when taken out of this context. My lone *David* loses the spontaneity that exists in the Bethune Pottery yard. He also loses the relationship with the others of his kind, for I have only a few cement

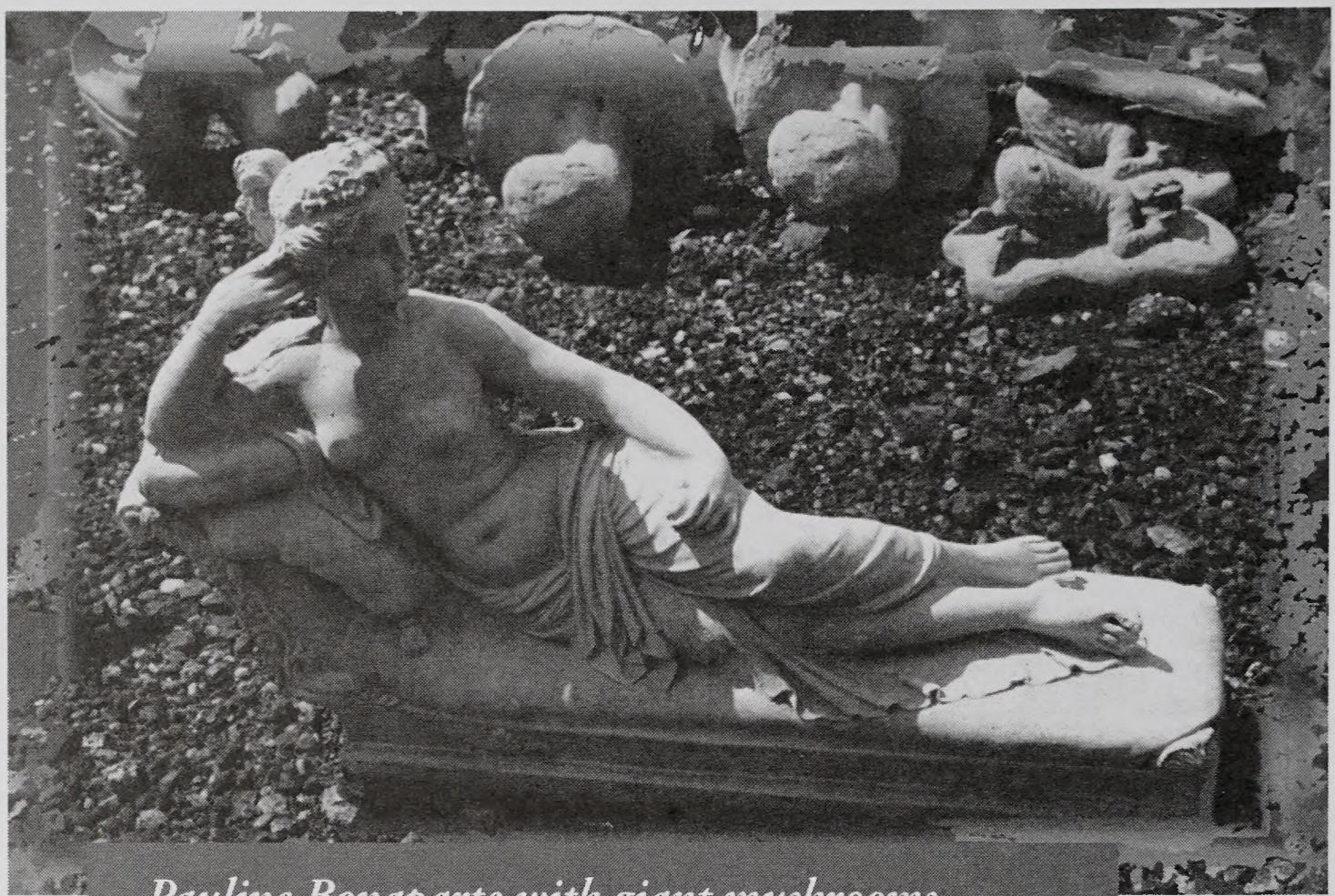


sculptures, all carefully chosen to match my backyard aesthetic. But even in yards that have many, many statues—the ever popular Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs; fierce guard dog; and lounging, bikini-clad alligators—the intriguing randomness of the pottery yard is lost.

There is no physical evidence that the juxtaposition of the sculpture at the cement yard is anything other than purely random, but the combinations that happen are simply magical. For example, in my garden at home, I took great care in making sure that my gargoyle fountain was

Madonna of the geese





Pauline Bonaparte with giant mushrooms



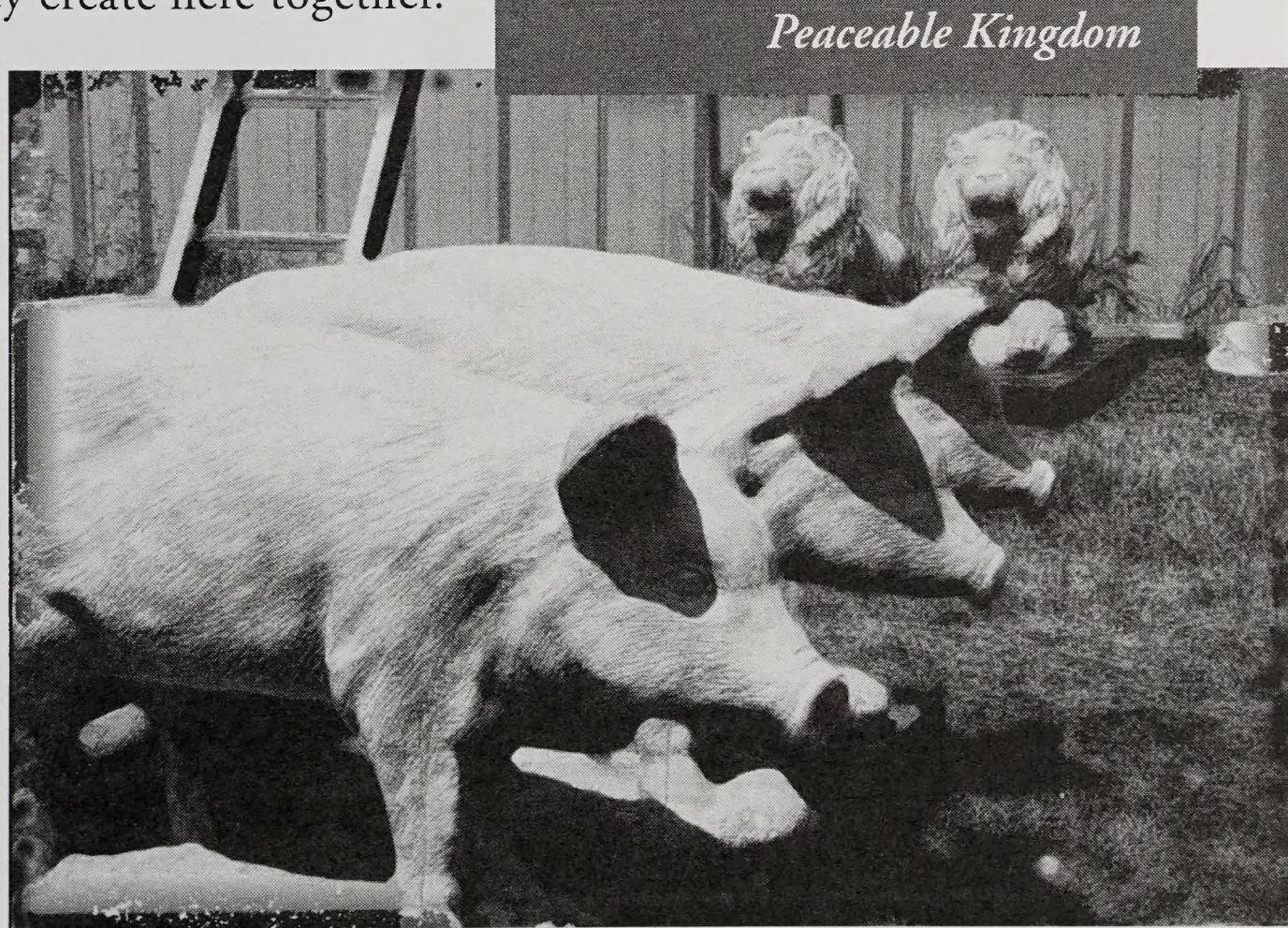
Goddess of the cement yard



placed on a medieval style pedestal for it would surely be in bad taste to mix art periods in such a cement sculpture display. But at the Bethune Pottery anything goes. Perhaps there are a few daring individuals who approach their own backyard sculpture with wild abandon, but the very act of choosing the next piece to take home defies absolute randomness. Madonnas with geese, Pauline Bonaparte with giant mushrooms, Saint Francis with pot bellied frogs, forty or so partially clad Greek goddesses looking in the same direction as if they were all interrupted simultaneously—it is this abundance of cement sculpture at the Pottery yard that I find fascinating and indeed artistic in every sense. Isolated and alone in my yard, they lose the “crowd scene” effect.

As these sculptures are bought and shipped off to new homes, they will lose their acquaintances with their brothers and sisters, but they will establish themselves in other locations where perhaps they will again find order, pattern, and objective as parts of a focused collection. In the same way that a painter selects a brush, the “yard artist” selects the next addition to the installation. The collection, a work in progress, produced by a creative individual, using a most traditional material, is indeed an artistic expression. At home, the aesthetic shifts from random placement and juxtaposition to theme and display. But in the meantime, while they share this place of their origin, the Bethune Pottery, what a celebration of whimsy, reverence, and enchantment they create here together.

19

Peaceable Kingdom



¹ Bethune Pottery is located on Route 1 (3736 Jefferson Davis Highway), a half-mile south from the intersection with SC 341 (Main Street) in Bethune. My special thanks to the Stephenses for allowing me to use their product and facility as the subject of this essay

² The image titled *Goddess of the cement yard* combines separate photos.

Saints and Easter bunnies





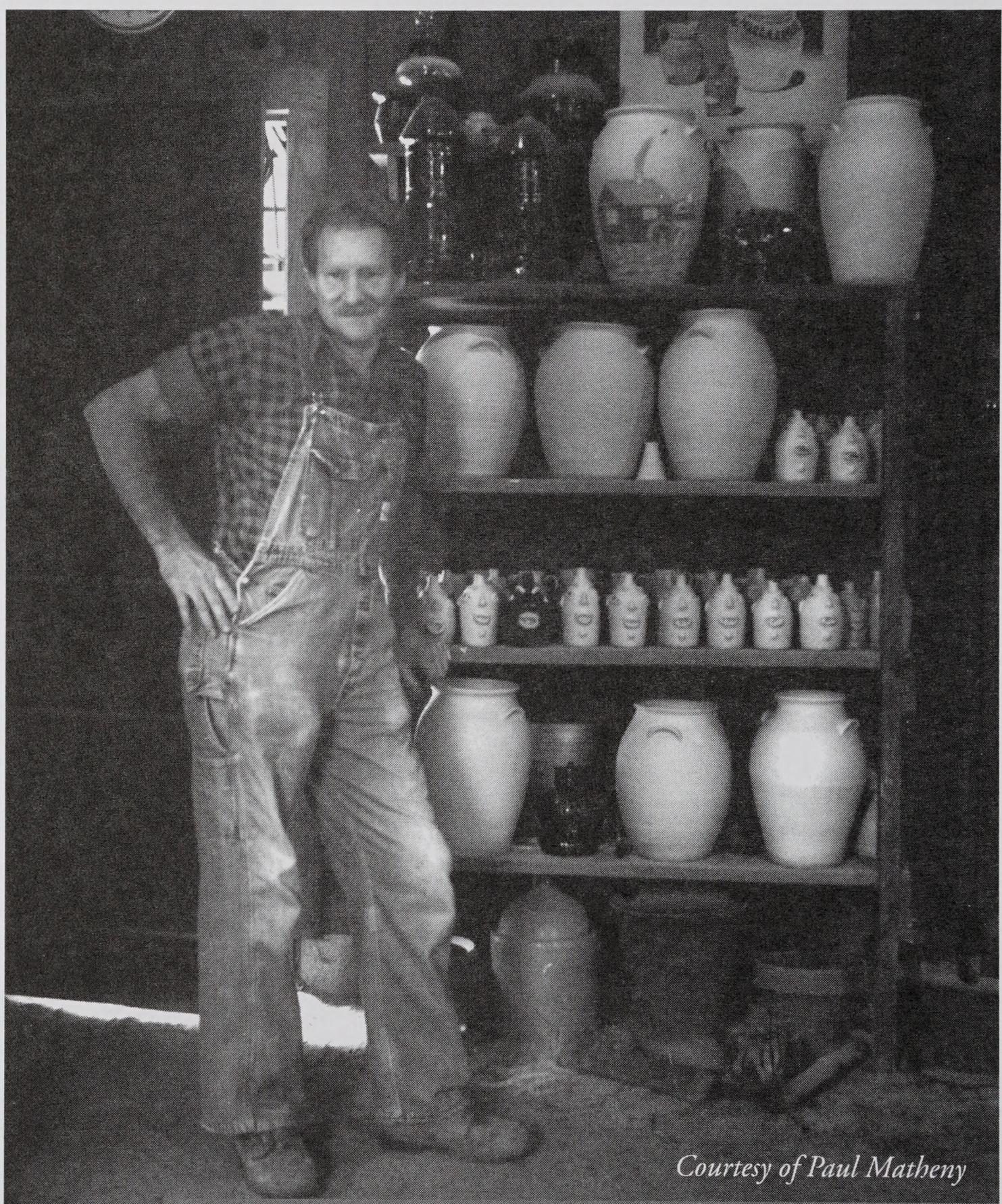
Collective Buddha



Face Vessels and Contemporary South Carolina Folk Pottery

~ Paul Matheny

22



Courtesy of Paul Matheny

*Contemporary potter Billy Henson and a sample of his
work. Lyman, South Carolina, 1998.*

Many cultures across time and distance have made ceramic vessels with anthropomorphic shapes and features. The Greeks, around 490 B.C., made forms with human characteristics and painted scenes of human life and activities. Pre-Columbian pots from Peru in 100 AD depict animal and human forms. The Catawbas have produced effigy vessels since before stoneware arrived in South Carolina (Blumer). However, many scholars believe that the practice of making face vessels arrived in South Carolina with artisans from the West Coast of Africa, noting that many of early South Carolina face vessels have African features. There are still tribes in Africa producing “Spirit Vessels” with human features to be used in burial ceremonies and as grave decoration (Demery 5). The South Carolina face jugs, however, are not quite like any of these. They are usually wheel thrown with human features made and applied by hand. Often various types of clay are used including Kaolin, a very white clay used for teeth and eyes (Baldwin 79-80).

Most of the early South Carolina face vessels came from the Old Edgefield District (present-day Abbeville), particularly from the Thomas Davies pottery and Miles Mill factory (Baldwin 79). These pieces created by enslaved African American artisans in the middle of the nineteenth century set a precedent for subsequent folk potters to follow. In the early 1900s the majority of the documented face vessels were created in the Upstate (the Piedmont and Appalachian region) by European-American potters, as the tradition moved from Old Edgefield northward into Spartanburg and Greenville counties (Ferrell). Most surviving pieces are from the Atkins pottery in the Upstate area. At least one was produced by the John Smith shop, and a few were produced by the Mountain View Pottery owned by George Clayton, particularly when a friend of the Claytons came by and asked for one that looked like a particular individual, or like that person’s wife. It would then be presented to that person jokingly as a gift (Clayton).

Ironically, there are now more contemporary potters producing figurative or face vessels in South Carolina than ever before. The most purely traditional of these is Billy Henson (b. 1941, active 1988–present) in Lyman. Descended from the Henson pottery clan that began producing ware around 1850, Billy Henson is the leader of the Upstate folk pottery revival in South Carolina. He recalled hearing the people



in his community talk about the old potteries, and the wagon trips to sell the ware. Being interested in doing things "the old way," as he recalls it, he decided to build his own pottery shop and kiln (Henson).

Henson's shop is constructed from part of the old John Smith Stoneware Shop from Norah, just down the street from where Henson has lived his entire life. His wood-fired tunnel kiln is constructed from bricks from the kiln of his great uncle, Jesse Vardry Henson, and his wheel was originally used in the workshop of George Clayton's Mountain View Pottery. Not only are Henson's tools and his style tied to the past, his clay now comes from Bethune, another area with a very rich history of pottery production. By the time Henson was ready to begin his own production, all of the local pottery shops had been gone for at least 40 years. He relied on information from local old-timers who had worked in these shops and vessels found in his neighbors' barns and basements (Henson).

Henson's production process is embraced by the entire community, especially during a firing. The kiln is loaded on the Tuesday or Wednesday before it is fired on the following Saturday. It usually takes 8 to 10 hours to get the kiln up to the point of "blast off" where the kiln reaches temperatures around 2000 degrees, with flames shooting through the kiln, and out the top of the chimney. The kiln then has to cool down very slowly for several days, and is unloaded the following Tuesday morning. The ware is then sold the next Saturday, and because of his high demand, Henson has to sell using a lottery system where each individual draws a number out of a coffee can for his or her place in line.

Other Spartanburg and Greenville County folk potters directly influenced by Henson's work include Henson's apprentice and assistant, James Roddy (active 1997–present) and his neighbor Billy Green (active from 1990-1996). Additional South Carolina self-taught potters include Winton and Rosa Eugene (active 1986-present) from Cherokee County and Otis Norris (active 1975-present) from Chesterfield County.

Other Piedmont artists in the South Carolina craft tradition include David Hooker and Dennis Stevens. Several potters in the Low-country (the southeastern coastal region) also draw on this tradition in their work, including Steven Ferrell, Elizabeth Ringus, Peter Lenzo, Alison McCauley, and Pee Dee Indian potter, Ricky Brunner.

Face Vessels



Face vessel by Billy Walker Henson, Spartanburg County, 1993.



Photos courtesy of the South Carolina State Museum

Face vessel attributed to the John Smith Pottery Shop, Spartanburg County, c. 1890.



25



Though many contemporary studio potters and ceramic artists have striven to separate themselves from their pasts, other clay artists are beginning to embrace the past and study the work of early South Carolina potteries. Some have begun to move away from their usual studio work to create more traditional vessels, particularly face jugs. Steven Ferrell from Edgefield County was one of the first studio potters to begin making anthropomorphic vessels. Ferrell has also revisited the early stoneware from South Carolina and uses the same design and production elements in his work (Ferrell).

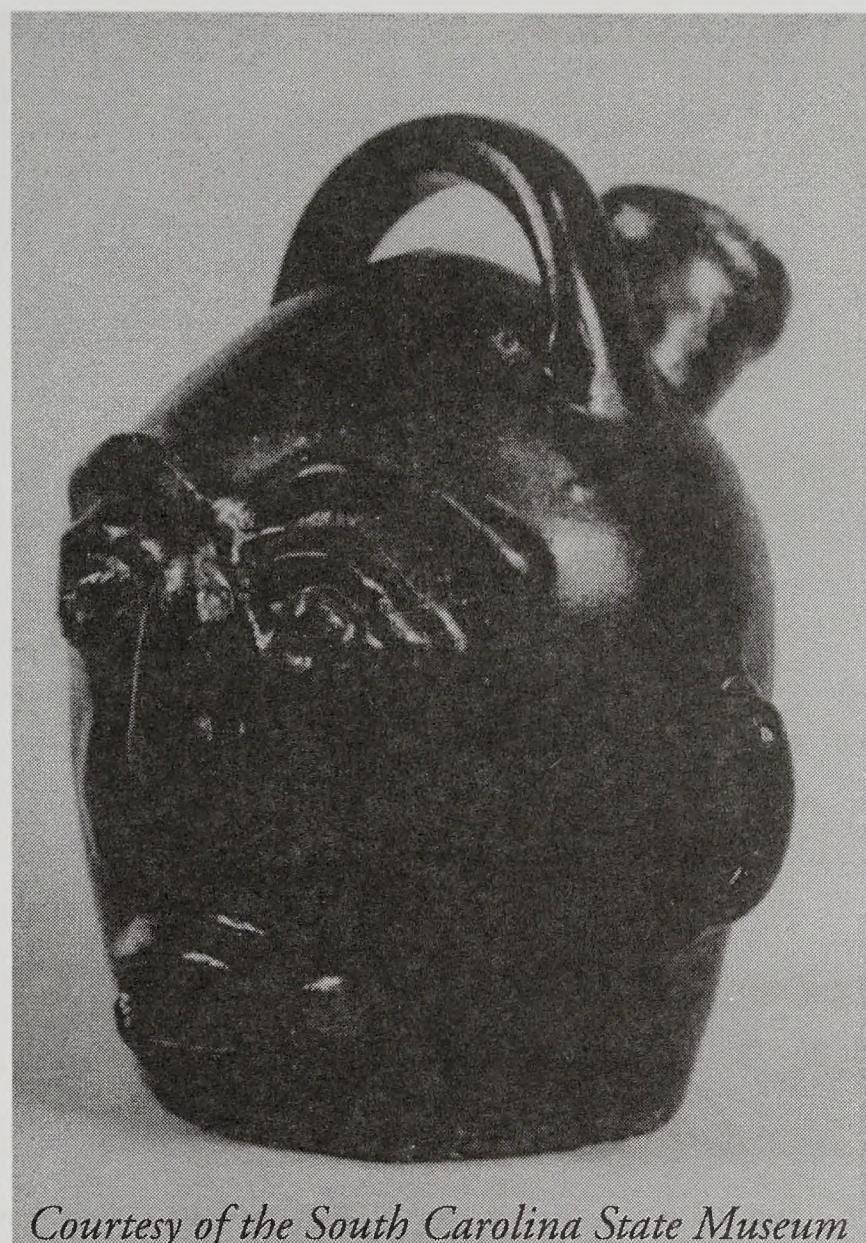
Dennis Stevens in Greenville County has studied and drawn on motifs from “Dave pottery” from Edgefield. A slave potter in the Old Edgefield district known only as “Dave,” this artist created his pieces in the 1840s to late 1860s in the Miles Mill shop. Dave’s work is unique both in style and the presence of the poetic verses he inscribed on his creations. Stevens has been inspired by Dave’s work to use his own verses on vessels to document a place and time in his own life, and figurative pieces inspired by folk potters—what he refers to as “Folk Pottery for a Microwave Generation” (Stevens).

Additional studio potters influenced by this traditional art form are Alison McCauley in Summerville, Elizabeth Ringus in Barnwell, David Hooker in Woodruff, and Peter Lenzo in Columbia. Peter Lenzo’s pieces have recently taken a turn to another traditional art form: memory jugs, where prized objects and small tokens are placed on the surface of a jug or jar. Some artists, including Joyce Caputo, look even further back for traditional inspiration in their work, creating pit-fired earthenware built and fired very similarly to that of the Catawba Indians and other indigenous people.

Through both innovation and revival, South Carolina potters have kept alive a tradition of pottery, particularly the creation of face jugs, with roots stretching back in this state well over a century and with ties to ancient cultures in Africa, Europe, and the Americas. The appeal of anthropomorphic clay vessels remains strong with both artists and their communities; and with a new generation of artists maintaining, and in some cases rediscovering traditional stone, ceramic, and clay vessel production, folk pottery in South Carolina faces a bright future.



*Face vessel attributed
to the Leonard Atkins
Pottery Shop,
Spartanburg County,
c. 1910.*



Courtesy of the South Carolina State Museum

27

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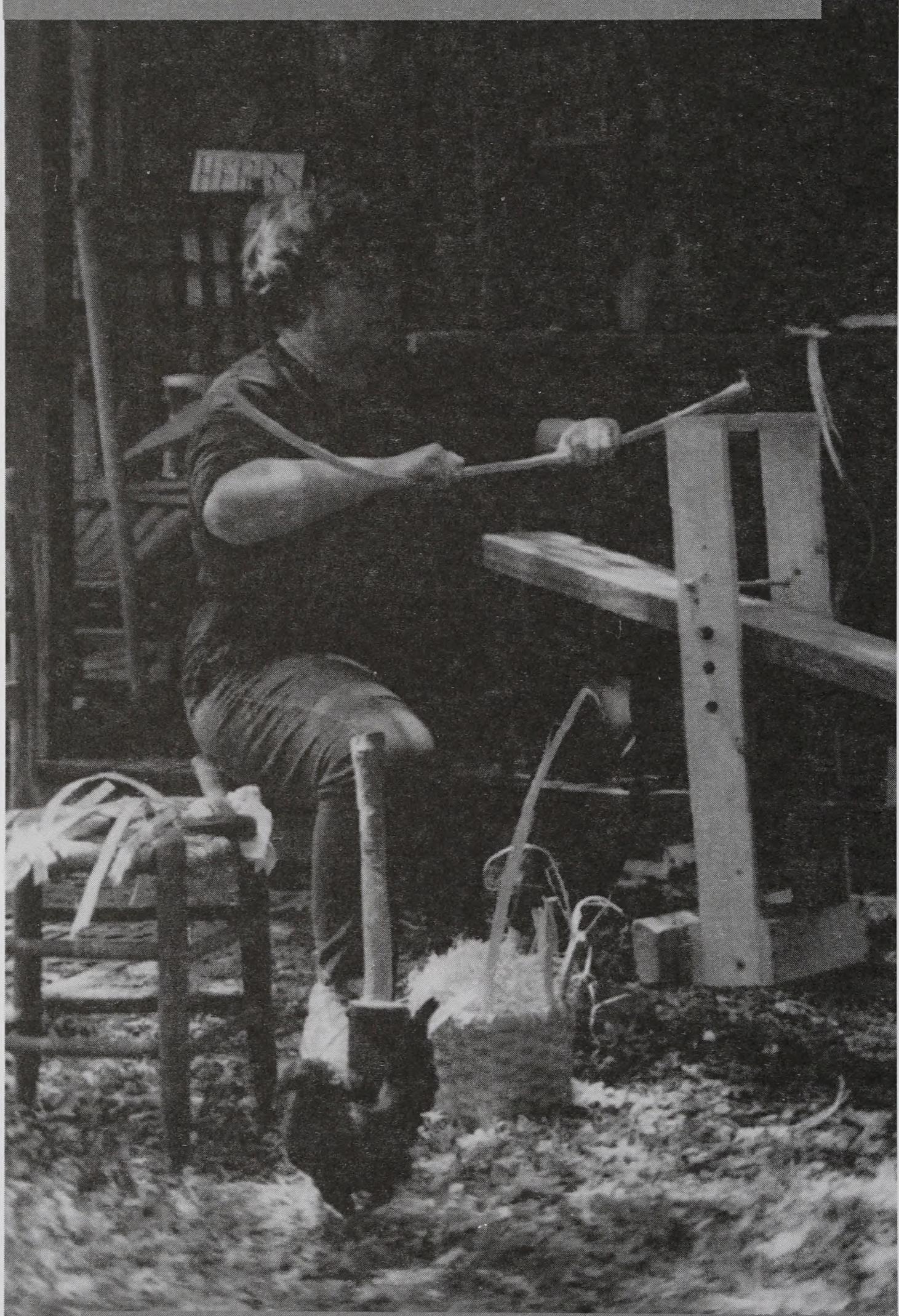
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Gale McKinley working a white oak splint on the shaving horse. Her pet chicken "Studs" is in foreground.



Photos courtesy of Gale McKinley

About Fishing, Making Split Oak Baskets, and Other Affairs of Everyday Life: The McKinley Family of Anderson, South Carolina

~ *Gale McKinley*

As folklorists like to say, I am an “active tradition bearer” in my family, which means that knowledge of how to do certain things has been handed down orally from generation to generation. My family, like so many other families in the Upcountry of South Carolina, came from Scotland, Wales, and Ireland and settled in the Southern Appalachian Mountains. They generally lived a self-reliant lifestyle; they did whatever was necessary to keep body and soul together. The rhythm of their lives matched the rhythm of the natural world around them. They made the most of what they needed and grew much of their own food. They planted corn to feed themselves and the livestock, wheat to grind for flour, and for hay, and cotton as their cash crop for the year. They had a horse or mule for plowing the fields and pulling the wagons. They kept cows for milk and butter; hogs for ham, bacon, fatback, and lard; bees for honey; chickens for their eggs, Sunday fried chicken dinner, and if they were lucky, enough feathers to fill their pillows and mattresses. Most of their everyday objects were made by someone in the family, whether it was a piece of furniture, a carved wooden bowl or spoon, a new dress, or a quilt made from the scraps. There was usually one person in the family who learned the “doctoring” skills necessary to take care of minor injuries and ailments and someone who sang or played a musical instrument and kept the old songs alive. Hunting, trapping and fishing skills were invaluable.

Another important skill that went along with fishing was knowing how to make split oak baskets. Farmers and fishermen relied on baskets of all shapes and sizes as essential tools in everyday life. Daddy’s most vivid memory of his Grandpaw Burton was of him with a large basket over his arm doing the daily chores around the farm. Their large field baskets, usually rather roughly made, were used in harvesting cotton and corn. The bushel or half-bushel baskets were used for measuring grains and other crops. The women folk had baskets for hanging the



wash on the line or on the barbed wire fence on wash day and for storing clothes and quilt scraps. A small basket with a lid made a good place to store their sewing supplies. They also had garden baskets for gathering tomatoes, beans, squash, and other vegetables, and there were apple and berry baskets for gathering all types of fruit. The family usually kept chickens and gathered the eggs in a basket. Another type of basket that was made and used by both my mother's and father's families was a fish basket. They made this type of basket from a white oak tree for catching fish in the river. Split oak basket making was one of the traditions handed down in my family.

There were many materials available in the South Carolina Upstate for the early settlers to use for making baskets: cattail, rye or oat straw, broom sedge, willow shoots, corn shucks, various vines, river cane, yellow poplar, hickory, and oak. The materials and techniques used were often a reflection of the cultural and ethnic background of the basket makers. But the white oak tree, *Quercus alba*, became the material of choice throughout this area.

White oak was preferred because of its toughness and ease in splitting. 30 It is also extremely durable even in wet conditions. The seasonal round of farming activities and hunting and fishing seasons dictated basket-making time. Most baskets were made in the spring after the crops were laid by or in the winter after the fall crops were harvested and the hogs were killed, but before time to start turning the fields to plant the spring crops. While some families were well known for making baskets to sell to other people as a way of making a living, my family usually made baskets only for their own use.

The somewhat unusual part of my family's story was that they lived on the Savannah River in the northern part of South Carolina and Georgia and made much of their living from the river. Daddy says that his Grandpaw Tom McKinley, who was born about 1875, was the one who knew about the river and fishing and how to do things. He, along with his wife, Elizabeth, raised eight children by hunting, fishing, farming, and trapping along the river. I remember seeing a photograph of Great Grandpaw sitting in what appears to be a dugout canoe, holding a cane pole and fishing in the river. Great Grandpaw, with the help of his older boys, ran a ferry across the Savannah. In those days there were no bridges, so everyone depended on the ferry to carry them from



Georgia to South Carolina. My grandaddy, Amos McKinley, was born in 1904 and was raised on the river. He often talked about how his older brothers would be put in charge of running the ferry for the day and looking after him and his younger brother. Well, the older brothers didn't want to be bothered with looking after the younger ones, so they would take them across the river on the ferry and put them out on the other side to spend the day on their own. Then the older boys would ferry back across to the other side and sit and play cards all day waiting for passengers to arrive. Along about suppertime they would ferry back across to pick up the younger brothers and take them home.

Grandaddy knew a certain stretch of that river bottom so well that he could seine it at night. Sometimes he would take his two sons, Juby and Doy seining. Uncle Doy recalls, "We loved to git in that river and git the fish, instead of having to wait for them to bite. It was so dark...you didn't have no light; you'd just pull the seine up and listen to 'em flap. You didn't know whether it was a snake or a fish. You just reached in there and got 'em out—whatever it was." Daddy continues, "We had a sack, just a regular old tow sack, and we'd cut a circle out of an old inner tube. It had the elastic in it, you know, and we'd put that up near the top of the sack. When we'd catch a fish in the seine, we'd push it down through that inner tube "neck." It kept the fish in there if you got in over your head. The sack would still be wet when we got home and the old catfish would still be alive!"

31

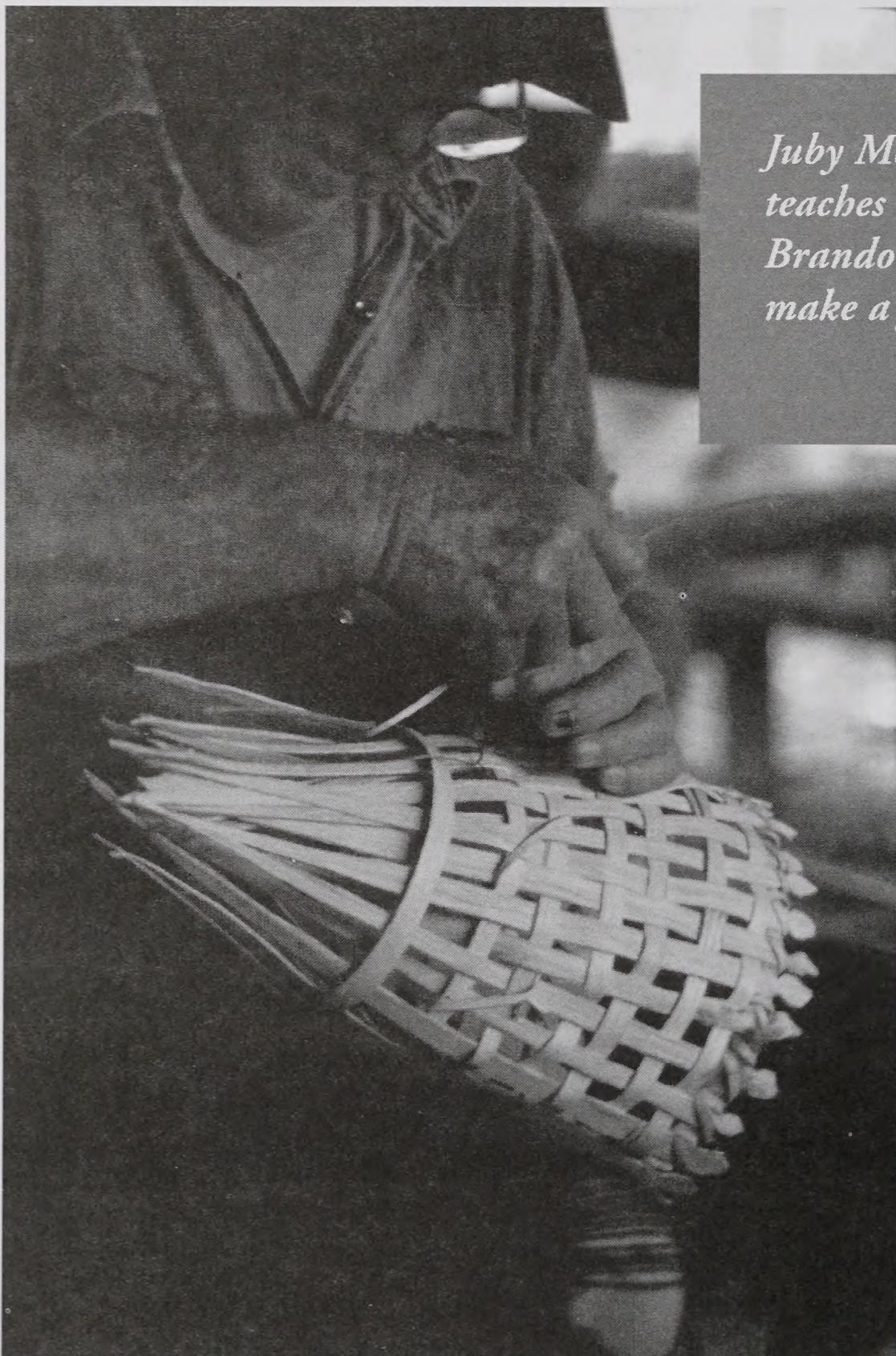
Another way they caught fish from the river was by using a fish basket to trap the fish. Daddy tells, "We'd go down there to the Savannah River and we'd find where the river was run back against the bank and set our baskets under there because we knew the old catfish wanted a dark place to stay. Sometimes we'd tie the basket but most of the time we'd just use a hook on the end of a hoe handle and we'd run it down there until we could feel it hit the basket and hook it and bring it out like that." He adds, "But if you didn't tie it off and it happened to come a big rain—your basket would go too."

My dad, Juby McKinley, was born in 1927 and learned to make fish baskets as a lad from his dad, in the 1930s. Daddy says about finding a tree:

Daddy and I would just go to the woods, generally in the spring, and get a tree to make a basket out of, because then we could



use it to fish with all summer. Also, it's a good time to work with white oak because it's sappy. He'd pick out a tree that he thought would make a good fish basket. It might be about six to twelve inches in diameter near the base, at least five feet long, straight grained, not leaning or forked, with no limbs coming from the trunk for at least five feet up. We'd cut it off the length we wanted and take the pole to the house. Then we'd get under a shade tree, get a couple of wedges, an ax, a hammer or maul, whatever we had, and start splitting that thing. We'd split the pole half in two. Then we'd split it into quarters. Then we'd split it into eighths and if necessary, we'd split it into sixteenths,



*Juby McKinley
teaches his grandson
Brandon how to
make a fish basket.*



depending on the size we wanted. You'd get it down to where the splints were about an inch wide.

Up to this point we've been splitting across the grain. Then we'd have to take the bark off with a sharp knife or a drawknife and you'd have to take the heart out of it and start splitting the piece you had left. It wouldn't be an awful lot. It'd be about an inch wide and five feet long and probably about three-quarters of an inch to an inch thick, which would be the sap part of the wood. You'd take that part then and shape and square it with a knife and get it as straight as you could. Then you'd take a knife of any kind (all we ever had was a butcher knife) and start splittin' it the opposite way—the way the grain ran down it. You'd split it half in two. Then split each of those in half and so on until you had it the thickness you wanted or until you couldn't split it down any more. You'd have to work slow. If you worked it too fast, it'd cutout on the side. But if you saw one side gettin' too thin, you had to bend the other side really sharp, and do your splittin' off that side and hold the other more steady until it equaled up. And once you've got 'em that far along you take a knife and scrape 'em to where they're smooth and limber enough to work with.

Now we're ready to begin to weave a basket. The process varies greatly here depending on the type of basket we're making, but to make a fish basket, we start by making a ring from one sturdy splint to attach the ribs to. This will form the mouth of the basket. We notch one end of about thirty splints approximately five feet long. We attach each rib by lacing it to the ring and crossing the lacing at the notches. Then we weave splints over and under each rib, starting at the mouth end until we have woven down about two thirds of the length of the basket. We then start tapering it in a little and weave a few more, creating a conical shape but not closing the end of the basket completely. We now make a smaller conical insert, or muzzle, to place inside the larger cone by following the same procedure as before. We sharpen the ends of all the splints of both baskets, place the smaller cone inside of the larger cone and lash the two "mouth ends" together with a splint to form one basket. We use a long flexible splint to tie the narrow end of the basket together temporarily.

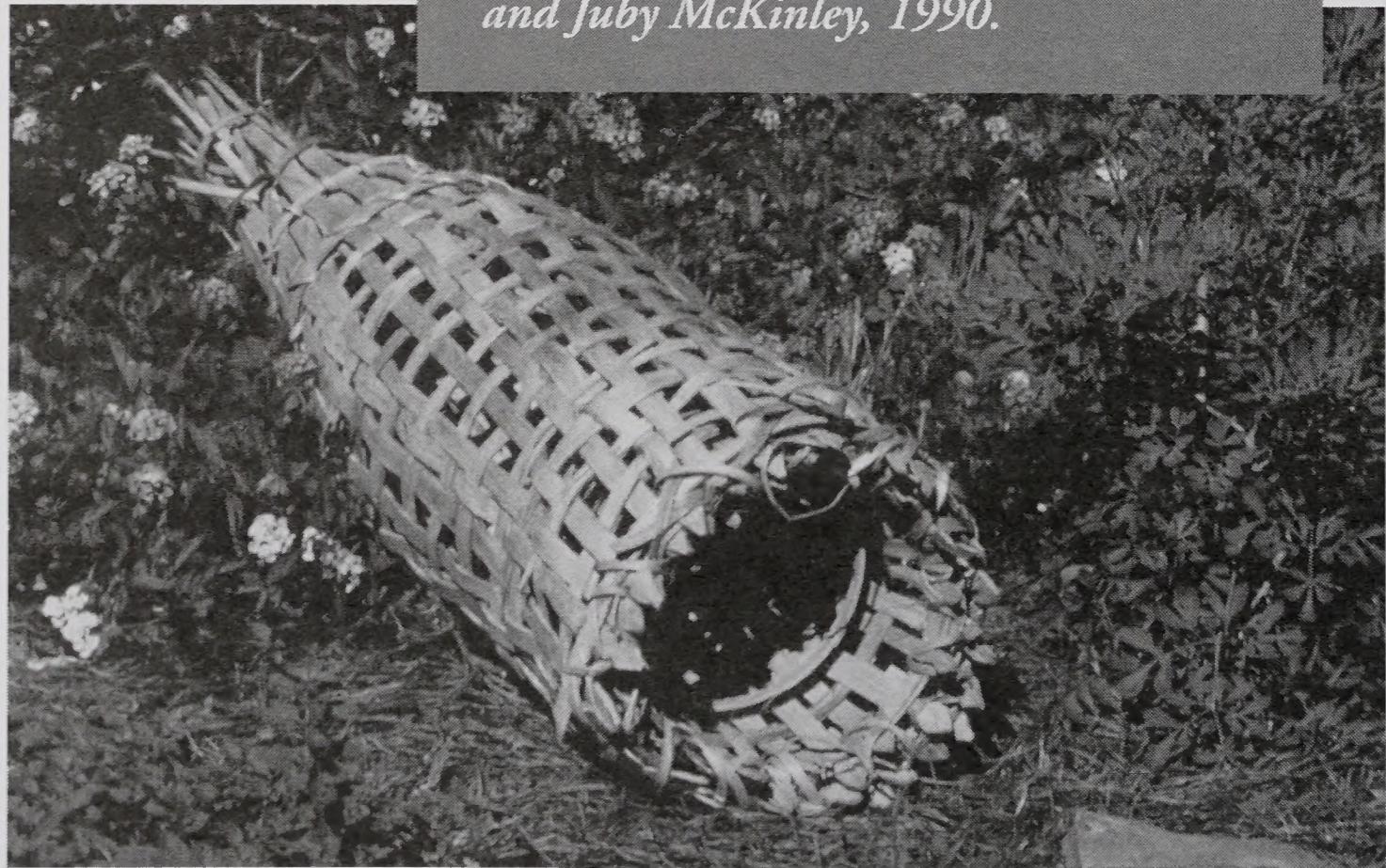


Daddy says:

The fish basket would be about five feet long, with an opening of usually ten to twelve inches wide. The idea of a fish basket, or trap, is that the fish will swim into the round mouth end, through the fingers of the first, smaller basket into the belly of the larger basket and get caught there. That size basket would catch an eight to ten pound fish if you happened to be that lucky. When we'd go "look" the old fish baskets, we'd pull 'em up and we could hear the fish splashing around inside the basket before we could see 'em. Then we knew we had fish! To get the fish out of the basket, you'd untie the pointed ends and pour 'em into a tow sack or bucket. They'd all pour right out. Then you'd bait it with more cottonseed cakes and go again. We'd look 'em every other day.

I remember Daddy and Grandaddy making fish baskets up into the 1960s, but by that time things were changing rapidly. Hartwell Dam was being built on the Savannah River and most of the places my family lived and fished and ran the ferry were underwater. Fish baskets were becoming obsolete, as was the need for making almost any other kind of basket. I felt a sense of urgency to learn all I could about this tradition before it was gone forever.

Split oak fish basket by Gale McKinley and Juby McKinley, 1990.





*Split oak egg
basket by Gale
McKinley,
1998.*



35

Unfortunately, no matter how hard we try, as each generation passes the next generation has, at best, only a small amount of the accumulated knowledge. So, a lot has been lost. Even now there are so few split oak basket makers that we are being called a dying breed.

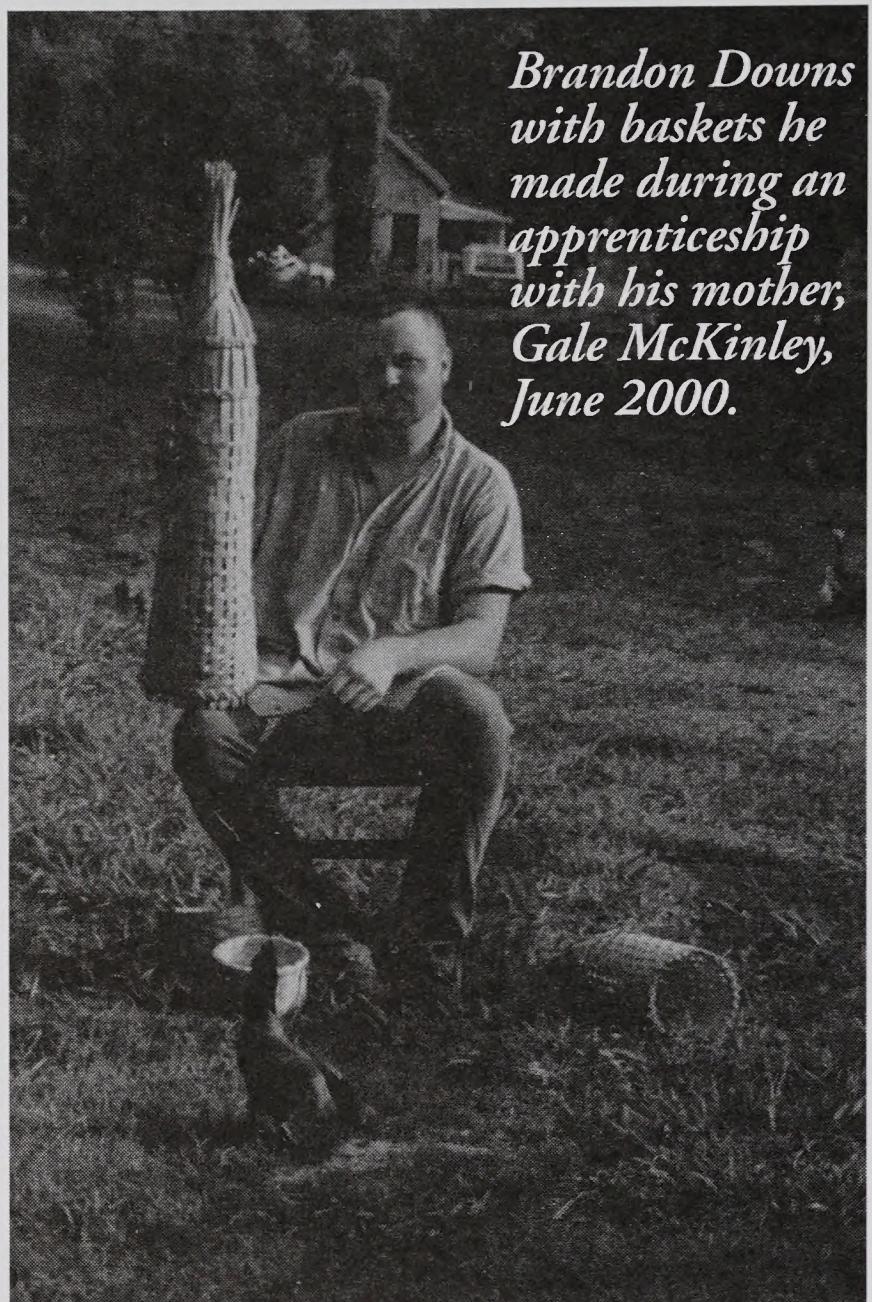
Not only is the knowledge being lost, but the very materials we work with are becoming scarce. It is getting harder and harder to find a good tree. It takes a certain combination of soil, water, and temperature to create the best conditions for growing a white oak tree that will make a good basket. It can take hours of walking in the woods to find just one tree that we think might work well. Even so, for every two trees we harvest, one may have so many hidden flaws that it renders it mostly unusable for anything but firewood.



Despite all the challenges we now face I am encouraged by the fact that my son, Brandon, has learned the skill and seems to be interested in continuing to make baskets. Even my little granddaughter likes to help me make my baskets.

This fish basket design has been used for hundreds, if not thousands of years, by a number of different cultures in different parts of the world. The size varies a little, as do the materials, depending on what is available in each location. Some are called fish baskets or fish traps and smaller versions are called eel traps. Interestingly, I recently came across the web site of a living history village in Scotland, which was reconstructed to represent the hunter-gatherer period of time, the Mesolithic Period, of about ten thousand years ago. Near this site, buried in the muck, archaeologists discovered a mostly intact basket, which they described as a fish trap, showing the inner smaller part of the trap through which the fish swim to get caught in the outer part of the trap. It was round at the mouth and conical shaped, made of willow and other organic material, and about a meter long.

I think we could safely say that the fish trap is a good, functional design. We might even guess that this design traveled with some Scottish settlers to North America and with adaptations to the new materials available in the New World (in this case, white oak) has remained virtually unchanged. I am intrigued by this discovery and fascinated with the connections to my family. It seems that the more I learn about baskets, fish baskets in particular, the more there is to be discovered.



Brandon Downs with baskets he made during an apprenticeship with his mother, Gale McKinley, June 2000.

Creativity and Ingenuity on the Mill Hill: Reflections on Cotton Mill Toys and Other Objects

~ Don Roper

For most of us “Lintheads,” growing up on the Cotton Mill Hill in Piedmont, South Carolina, was the best thing that could have happened to us. We had a great life. The mill provided jobs and the company provided a lot of social benefits. The mill also provided spare parts from which we made many useful everyday items.

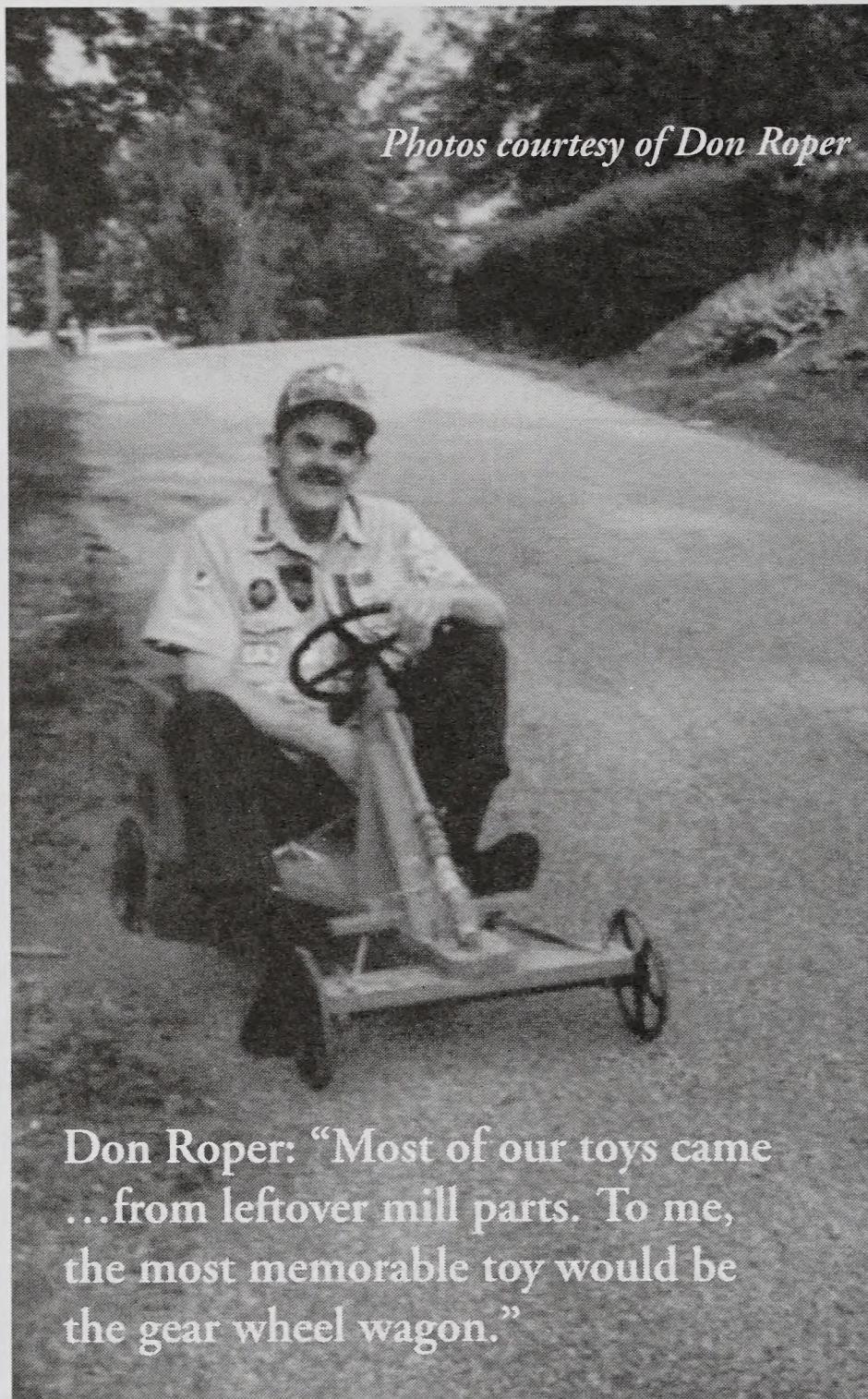
Most of our toys, for example, came not from the store but from leftover mill parts. To me, the most memorable toy would be the gear wheel wagon. At some time in our childhood, we all had one. The acquisition of the parts and the styles of construction varied, but there were many similarities, too. The wheels were pick gears off of the looms and (if we were lucky) we found a smooth hand wheel for the steering wheel. The steering drive was leather wrapped in two different directions on a cut-off broomstick. The body was made from whatever scrap wood we could find, and if we found a box of some kind, we were really in business. The brakes were made in different ways: if we didn’t find a picker stick or a piece of flat iron, we just stuck our feet down and wore out the soles of our shoes. The steering leather was usually tacked on the front axle and on the broom stick and about half way up the drive section a couple of empty thread spools were nailed on to guide the leather in its rounds. If we were impatient or couldn’t saw off Momma’s new broom handle, then we just steered with both feet on the front axle.

Many hours were spent building these contraptions and many fathers came home from work with the necessary materials, the ingredients for many hours of fun for their youngsters. Sometimes, there would be enough material for two wagons, and the neighborhood pals could race downhill on steep streets.

Just thinking about the gear wheel wagon brings back many memories of other items that were made from scrap from the mill. Many parts of the different textile machines had odd-sounding names, such as



pick toe, lizard, finger, crown, steps, battery, bumper, and foot, to name just a few. It was said that the early workers in the mill, most of whom came down out of the mountains of Georgia and North Carolina, gave the parts these names because they looked like whatever they named it.



Photos courtesy of Don Roper

Don Roper: "Most of our toys came ...from leftover mill parts. To me, the most memorable toy would be the gear wheel wagon."

Wooden shuttles from the weave room were other items that found different uses. These were sawed in two and used as gun racks. The tip end of the older type shuttles, a sharp piece of steel, was used in a couple of novel ways. A kid who could carve, or who had a parent who could, made a nice spinning top. Some of the more artistically inclined kids drilled holes in the bodies of their wagons and used shuttles as decorations. Harness frames from the looms were made into picture frames, and with hooks attached, they could be used as coat racks.

A bobbin of yarn, be it either warp or filling, was the most popular item carried home by a working parent. Many times the kids were waiting as Mom got home: "Where is the bobbin?" Making a ball from them was the only way lots of kids had of getting their favorite plaything. During the war years, that was all we could get. Yarn balls were made in different ways, but mostly we just simply wound the yard around a rock or stick the best we could, tied the ends to keep it from unraveling, and started throwing and hitting it. If we



could get a nickel for the price of a roll of black friction tape, we really had one that would last a long time.

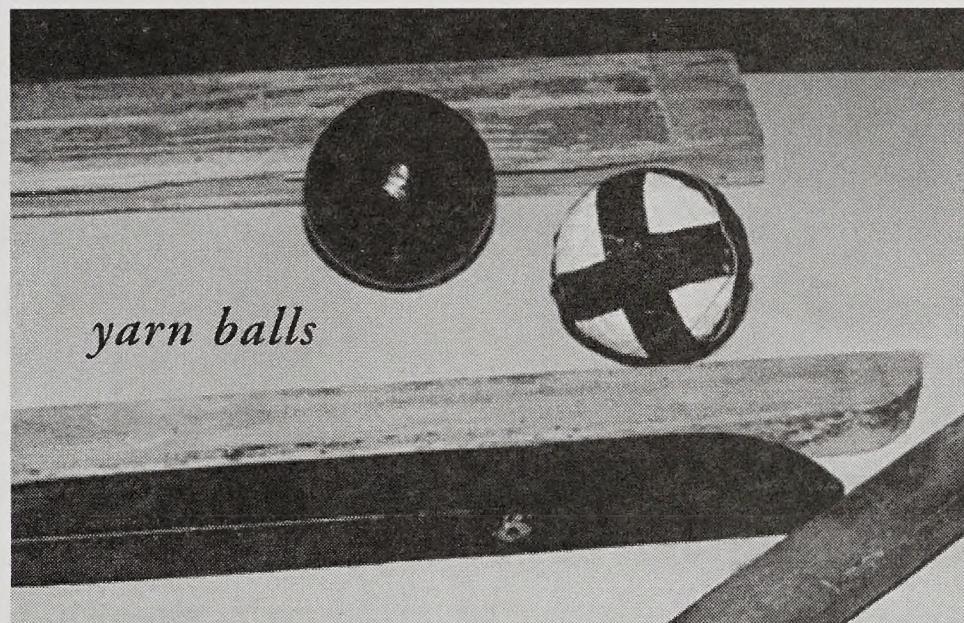
One boy on the Mill Hill would use some of his grandfather's beeswax to pull the yarn through as he wound it on a center of a tightly balled piece of inner tube. Such balls would travel farther when hit. Of course, as one might suspect, the other kids always made him bat against one of the looser-tied ones, so he wouldn't hit it so far into the woods.

If we were lucky to get one of those paddle balls that we could buy at the dime store, then we could use that ball to make the center of a yarn ball. That ball would hit better than most. My favorite memory of one of these kinds of yarn balls happened during the war years. We couldn't get balls, but they were easy to make; however, getting a bat was a real problem. When the mill carpenters would refloor a porch, we would try to get a piece of the flooring and whittle down one end to make a handle, which we did.

One summer day we were down on the ball field and, after the rain let up a bit, we could stand it no longer. Even with the mud puddles all over the field, we chose up sides and started the game. Charles "Cheese" Cox was the batter, and as the ball came to the plate, he really swung from the heels. "Whap!" You heard the bat and ball meet.

"Cheese" took off running as the fielders started looking around for the ball. No one could find it. "Cheese" never let up around first and second. As the fellows still looked blankly at each other, trying in vain to find the ball, "Cheese" circled on around third and headed for home, exclaiming, "Home run!" The next batter reached down in the mud in front of home plate and picked up the discarded bat. There on the end of the flooring plank bat was the ball, stuck to a nail.

39





We also made bats from picker sticks. Each loom in the mill had two picker sticks, one on each end, to throw the shuttle out and back with the filling, weaving its pattern in the warp to make the cloth. The picker stick had many other uses, such as for handles in hammers and hatchets. Just about every home had one; they were made of a very tough hickory—perfect for bats. We used the flat side to hit the ball in the “roll at the bat” games or to pass the time picking up rocks and hitting them as far as we could, usually down a hill or into the river. Golf wasn’t too popular with the kids of those days, but by leaving the picker on the end, we could pretend it was a golf putter.

Another favorite toy was the rubber gun, made from a flat plank, usually some of the flooring, cut with a handsaw. This required some skill or we might ruin a good piece of wood. Sawed in the shape of a pistol, the handle had to have a notch or a point at the very top. Just under this we attached one of Mom’s spring-type clothespins. We could nail it to the handle with tacks, but most of the time we tied it with a piece of a rubber band, also used as ammunition.

“Bullets” were cut from an old inner tube, either from a car or a bicycle. If we were hit at too close of a range, those things would really sting. Many an hour was spent down at the ball field under the grandstand, hunting each other for the “kill.”

Children weren’t the only Mill Hill residents with the ingenuity and creativity to turn spare mill parts into useful items. Our parents found ways to improve our homes, yards, and our lives in general using a variety of surplus parts, discarded pieces from mill machinery, and other materials from the mill.

The mill always had a big supply of leather, in all sizes, mostly for power belts, but there were some flat pieces that could be cut and used in several different ways. The most common use was as hinges for everything from the chicken coop door to the screens on the porches. Sometimes people would make their toolboxes with leather hinges on the lid.

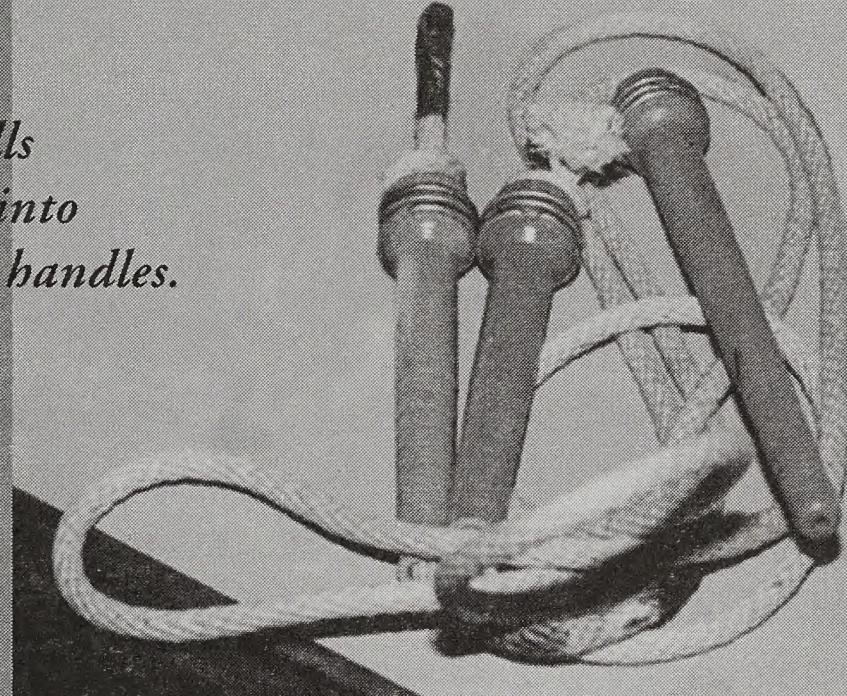
Leather straps often came from the spinning frames, which had a piece of leather, called a cot, that was used in the drafting area. This leather made a real good pocket for our homemade slingshots. The prongs of these slingshots were sometimes made from a piece of porch flooring, if you couldn’t find a perfect fork in a dogwood tree.



Many kids my age don't like to remember that leather straps could also be cut into tiny strips about a quarter of an inch wide, six inches long, and left with a hand hold on the bottom. Usually hanging in the kitchen within easy reach of Mom, these straps were utilized when she caught us doing something we weren't supposed to be doing.

Most fixers [repairmen] in the mill used the wide, thick belting to make their toolboxes they carried around on the job, especially in the weave room. Sawing a piece of plywood in an odd semicircle about a foot long, they nailed the leather to it and formed the sides, with another thinner piece attached to both sides of the top as a handle. This made a handy carryall box.

*Filing quills
converted into
jump rope handles.*



41

Another use of the wide leather belting was as half-soles on our brogans. Each mill house had a shoe last (an iron form that a shoe would fit on), and when the leather soles of the shoes wore out, a piece of leather belting was often tacked on and we continued to wear the big shoe.

When the carpenters went through the neighborhood fixing up the houses and replacing the porches, they carried their nails in an old wooden keg. Everyone hoped the kegs would be left behind when they were working at their house, as the kids wanted them for stools in their playhouse or even for Mom's dresser. Fitted with a soft cushion and



covered with a pretty piece of flour sack, these keg stools were an addition to every household.

Most of the mill supplies used to come in wooden boxes. Everyone watched the supply room, grabbing the boxes up as soon as they were emptied. By reinforcing them in special ways, they were often made into a nice tool box in which to keep all the handyman tools at home. This is also the type of box that the kids liked to get in order to make their gear wheel wagons.

The harness frame on the looms had hooks that held them to the upright arch of the loom and to the treadle on the bottom. These made excellent hooks for many uses, mainly for the gates and screen doors, and sometimes even as latches for small toolboxes.

The wooden roving bobbins used on the roving frames were another item with many uses. Some of the real old timers could blow them like horns, to make either the sharp "possum horn" type sound or to play a tune. Another good use for these bobbins as they got too scarred and scratched to run good work was to bash them with a hammer, turning them into kindling. Many a morning fire was started with the dry and oily bobbins. Today, craft shops have discovered them and are making kaleidoscopes out of them.

The wooden warp bobbins used in the spinning room were not quite as big but were made a little stronger and thicker. Stretching a cable across the ol' swimming hole was a favorite form of entertainment, and these bobbins made handles that would fit over the cable, allowing the rider to get all the way over the water without burning his hands. Another use was as handles for files and screwdrivers when the originals broke.

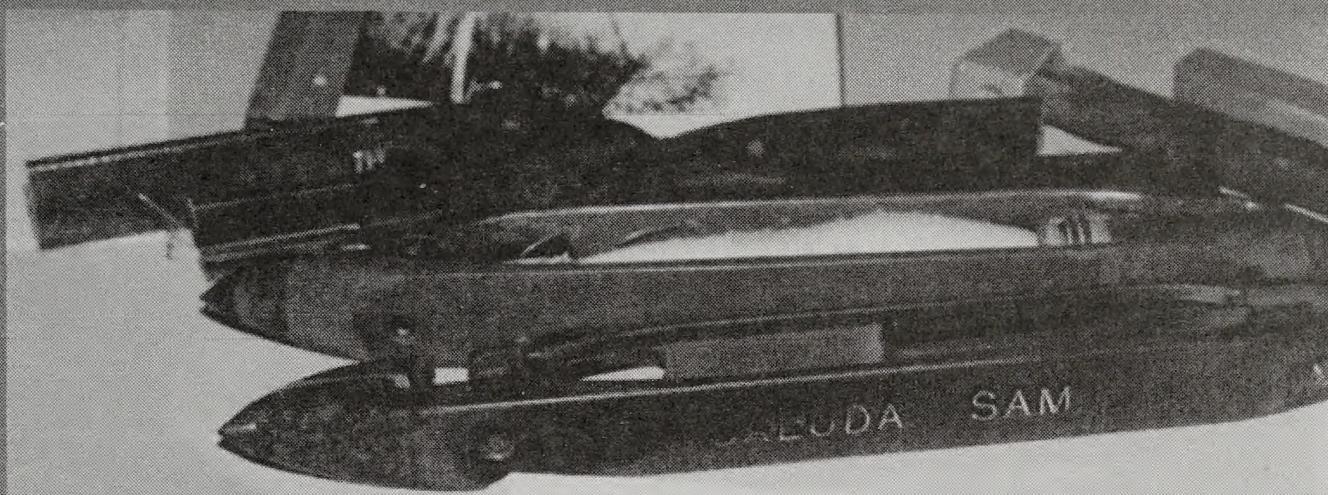
Loom beams had long slender rods that ran through the inside of the beam heads, giving the beam its much-needed strength. When the beams were too bad to be used you could get the rods and weld them to a center post. This made a nice hanging flower pot.

The spinning frame had a cloth tape that ran under and around the cylinder to turn four bobbins. The tape had many uses; the most common use was to be woven as seats for both the straight chairs and rockers of that era. Sometimes we used it in place of leather as the steering drive on our gear wheel wagons.

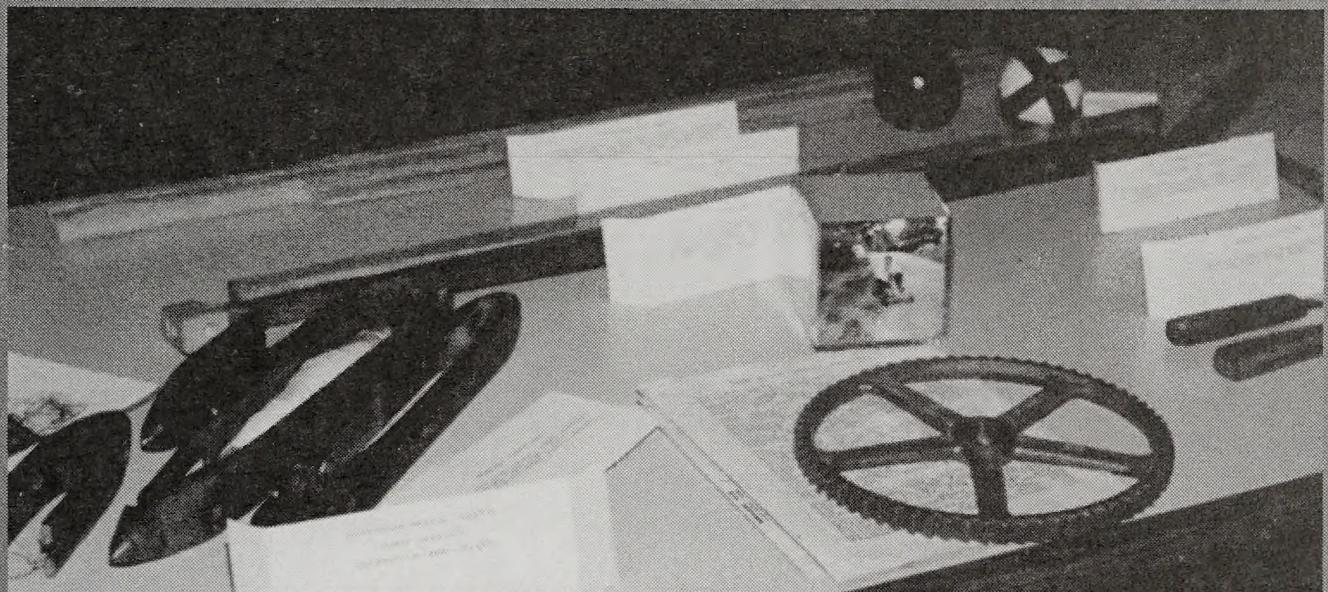
The section beam was about the largest and heaviest of the items used, and these were hard to get home. Both the beam head and the



*Wooden supplies used for toy guns,
name plates, tops, and other toys.*



Miscellaneous materials from cotton mills.



43

barrel had popular uses, though. Some barrels were made into lamps. The heads were used to make tables—some used around the house as furniture but more often in the kids' playhouses. The barrels could be sunk into a hole in the ground and, by adding a long heavy plank with a hole in the middle fitting over the open barrel top, we made a wonderful seesaw.

Waste was anything that came out during the processes that turned cotton into cloth. Slasher waste yarn was one type, stronger (hard) when starched and softer when not. Both types had their uses. For example, tie a long piece on to a big limb of a mighty oak tree and we had a wonderful swing. Sometimes we tied a big round knot and straddled or sat on it as we swung. We could tie them to a tire and ride out and back inside it. If one's father was a handyman, he tied two lengths on the limb and added a wooden seat like the swings at school.

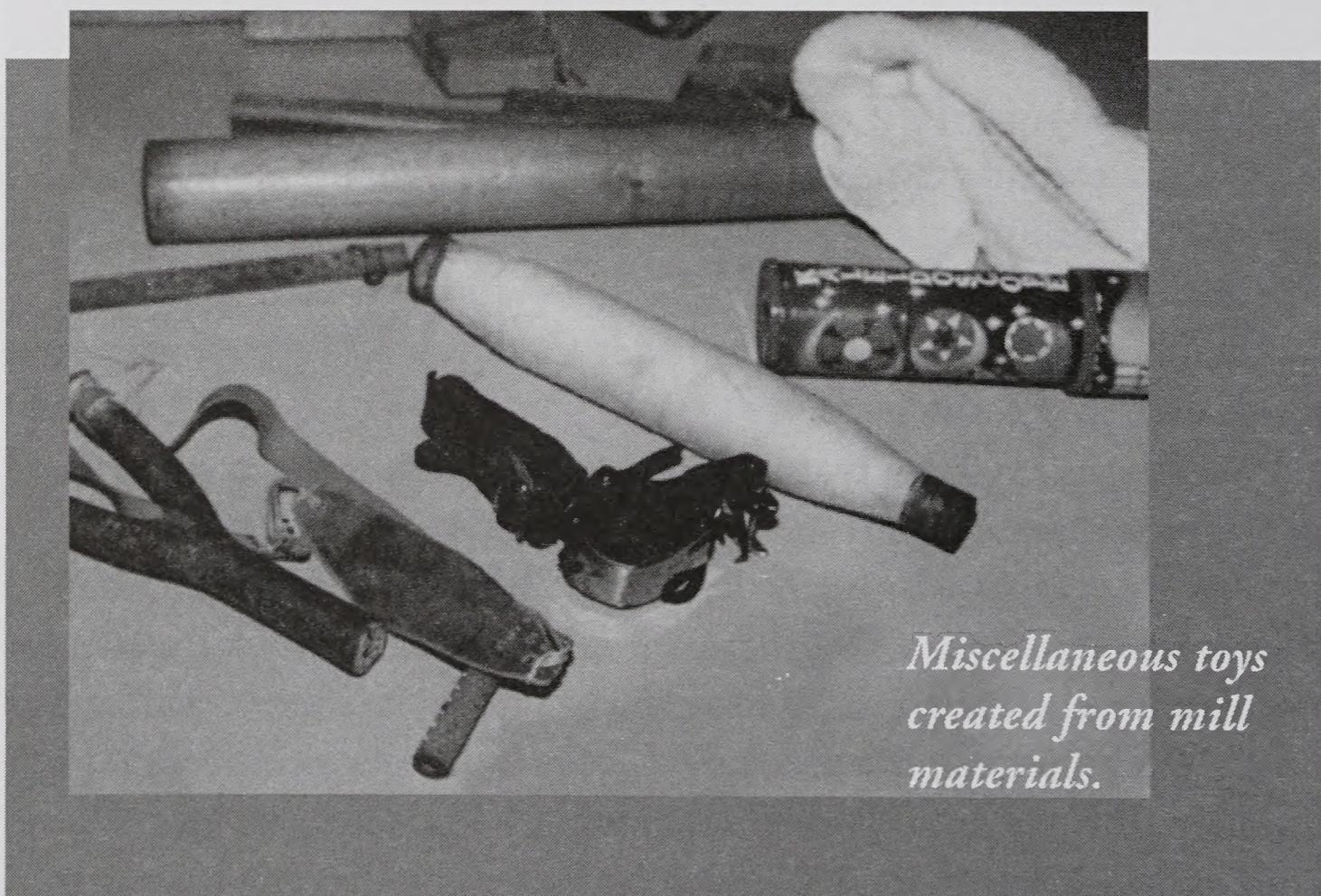


Stripping the slasher waste yarn down into narrow widths gave us some good string to tie up our tomatoes or pole beans. When kudzu was first introduced into the Mill Hill, some of the ladies wove a pattern on their porches with waste yarn and the kudzu soon climbed over it, making the front porch a nice cool shady place to rest.

Protector rods from the loom machinery were made with a longer narrow rod on one end with the other flat, sort of like a pistol handle. These rods were used as stakes in many different ways. For example, the grazing cow could be tied to one and it was hard to pull up. Gullies through the yards were blocked by boards that were held in place by a protector rod, giving its name double meaning. Down by the river, they were often sunk into the bank and the johnboat was tied to it when we left the river for the day.

The loom crankshaft shared many of the same uses as the protector rod. Being much stronger, crankshafts could be used for things requiring more strength. I know of one person who left one under the house he lived in, propping up a beam when he dug out for a cellar and workshop. Crankshafts were often used as gate posts for the dog and chicken fences and to keep the family milk cow in the shed yard.

The roving skewers, the sticks that the spinners placed the bobbin of roving on as they hung it in the creel, were used to make decorative



The author displays a slingshot and a wooden gun made from discarded cotton mill materials.



posts on what-nots, book cases, and shelves. The filling quills, made from wood, were also used as posts on what-nots and other furniture. I have seen them used to make a head for a bed, such as the popular "spool bed."

Spinning spindles were made of a very hard steel. The sharp filling spindle made a good punch, for leather and wood.

The metal cutting saws in the shop were another item made of a very strong composition. The last blacksmith at the mill used to make knives from this steel. Work in many kitchens was made easier with one of his creations.

Card and drawing cans were probably used in more different ways than any other item. We could make stools and tables for the kids' tea sets. My brother and I used to fight over who got to sit on a stool made from one when we were just reaching the table. When we were going to school, every classroom had one that was used as a trash can.

It was also possible to cut the top into a ring. Putting a nail through the end of a broomstick, we then had a hoop to roll around the yard or



down the street through the neighborhood. We could also use the can as a hood for gear wheel wagons, by splitting it and nailing it over the steering section.

The empty traveler cans from the spinning room were used to make banks. Lots of the fathers kept them in their toolboxes at work, and as the year went along, they dropped their change into it. This money sometimes was the Christmas budget for the family.

The card cylinder had a big brass bearing on its main shaft. When these could not be used any more, a favorite use was to saw it in two parts and use it as an ashtray.

"the mill provided its employees and their families materials for toys, furniture, tools, and home décor"

In more modern times, the card had a front added that had a big spring on it, which held two heavy rollers tightly together. This attachment crushed the cotton leaves and other foreign material and caused them to fall out as the card did its job. We quickly found a use for the springs, especially in the wintertime. When we had to put on car chains, we always tried to have a set of the springs on hand. Attaching it to the sides of the chain kept it tight on the wheel.

Finally, card chains, used to pull the card flats over the faster-turning cylinder in the carding process, had many uses. Being made like a figure eight, they were very durable. These chains were used mostly for swings, due to their strength. Some folks used them to line off their flower gardens or even their driveways. I remember seeing one with a hook on each end that was used by hunters when they went to the fields. The chains were used to hook two cars together to get them out of mud holes and other soft places in the fields. The only drawback to the use of the chains was that they rusted very easily.

The last time I saw one of these chains in use was in the old mill yard of the Anderson County plant in Piedmont, currently being torn down. Here, a card chain is being used as a barrier to keep traffic out of the old parking lot.

The mill provided many items, which ingenuity and skill transformed into a multitude of household materials. Beyond the obvious benefit of a steady income, the mill provided its employees and their families materials for toys, furniture, tools, and home décor, and perhaps most of all, memories.

“Come Along, Let’s Ride This Train”: Santee River Testimonies, Praises, and Songs

~ Vennie Deas-Moore

My fieldwork has taken me back to the Santee Delta, the home of my family for generations. The Delta has had a long history of rice cultivation. My mother recalls working in the spongy gray bogs, along the extensive back creek salt marshes, walking carefully not to sink to her waist. The tall cane-like marsh grass would continuously beat the body almost to the ground. Traveling to a slightly higher ridge, one encounters clinging briar patches. During the summer months of planting, sand flies, deer flies, and mosquitoes distract one from the watching alligators and wild hogs.

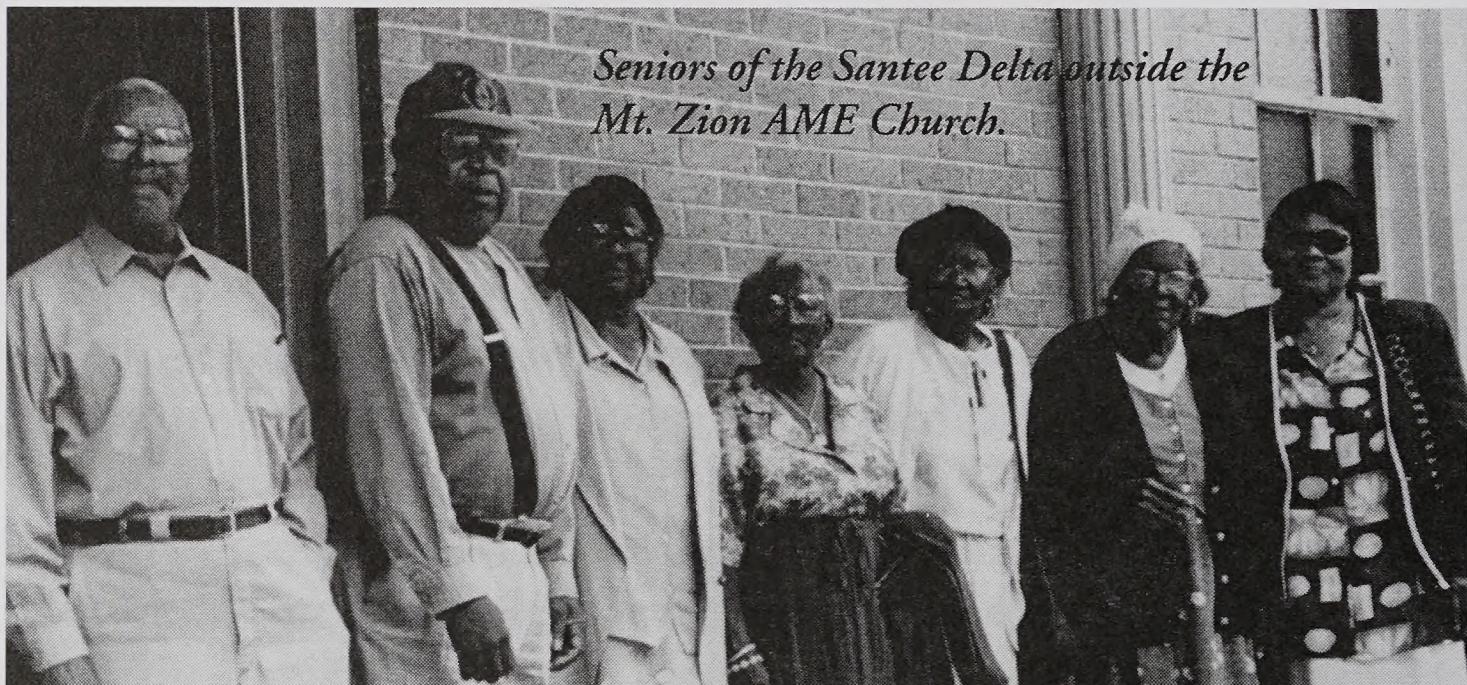
The Santee Delta is some forty miles north of Charleston, South Carolina. It quietly forks off of the Old Coastal Highway. The narrow roads bend along the Santee, a river of vast volume, bearing down silt in a manner that makes it resemble the Nile. Like the Nile’s periodic floods, the Santee fed those massive rice fields. Sixteen miles from its mouth, the Santee divides and these two streams flow independently into the ocean. Between them is the lonely delta of the Santee, formerly one of the greatest rice-growing areas in the world, now returned to a green wilderness as pristine as it must have been before Europeans and enslaved Africans arrived.

47

During the 1700s the American colonists in South Carolina and Georgia discovered a very profitable economic plantation system, “rice planting.” French Huguenots settled along the North and South Santee Rivers. Although these colonists had no experience or skill in rice cultivation, they learned that Africans from the “Rice Coast” or “Windward Coast,” a region stretching from Senegal down to Sierra Leone and Liberia, were traditional rice-growers. These colonists also discovered that the moist semi-tropical marshes of the Santee Delta were comparable to the West African coast. With West African slaves labor, the Huguenots owned and developed some of the wealthiest plantations in the Americas.



The swampy rice fields are now silent. Rice is no longer grown. Yet the descendants of the great rice growers are left, living throughout the Santee Delta. Their families continue the traditions and folkways of their West African roots. Nestled in the Delta are these people and their beautiful music. The senior citizens of the Santee Delta meet at Zion AME Church in South Santee, South Carolina. They are without musical instruments; their voices, the clapping of their hands, and the patting of their feet carry the rhythm. It is a spontaneous blending of call and response. "The real Negro singer cares nothing about pitch. The first notes just burst out and the rest of the church joins in—fired by the same inner urge. Every man trying to express himself through song. Every man for himself. Hence the harmony and disharmony, the shifting keys and broken time that make up the spiritual," states Zora Neale Hurston in *The Sanctified Church* (80-81). Ethnomusicologists trace such style of singing, chants, and shouting to West African roots.



Seniors of the Santee Delta outside the Mt. Zion AME Church.

48



Photos courtesy of Vennie Deas-Moore

The seniors of Zion AME church maintain religious and musical traditions of utmost importance to this community, the community of my youth. Regular church attendance was the norm for my community. At a young age, I can remember spending long hours in church on Sunday, only to return for evening services, experiencing singing, preaching, and “rejoicing in the name of the Lord.”

Weeknight prayer meetings were common in the rural churches. Again, one would experience increasingly vigorous shouting and feeling the “Holy Ghost” until far in the night. There would be testifying and unloading of one’s burdens.

I find it difficult to isolate this music into bars and notes. As a child, I was not taught formally the singing of the gospel. But I learned to participate with the adults around me. The music elicits foot tapping, hand clapping, and shouting. The singing is often interspersed with spoken testimonies, and the lead singer usually sings in a call-and-response pattern. The singing becomes spontaneous and one feels and displays his or her emotions.

The songs not only relay feelings to the other members of the church, but the singer also experiences and communicates with the “Holy Spirit.” One may become “happy” or go into a trance or lose consciousness. The music heals the soul; it releases inner tribulations and simultaneously gives joy, hope, and salvation.

Prayer meetings are held during midweek; a church leader is in charge of prayers, songs, and testimonies. The highly spirited singing and shouting usually sweeps across the congregation like wildfire. The following is an attempt to transcribe the music and the experience of one such prayer meeting at the Santee Delta AME Zion Church.¹

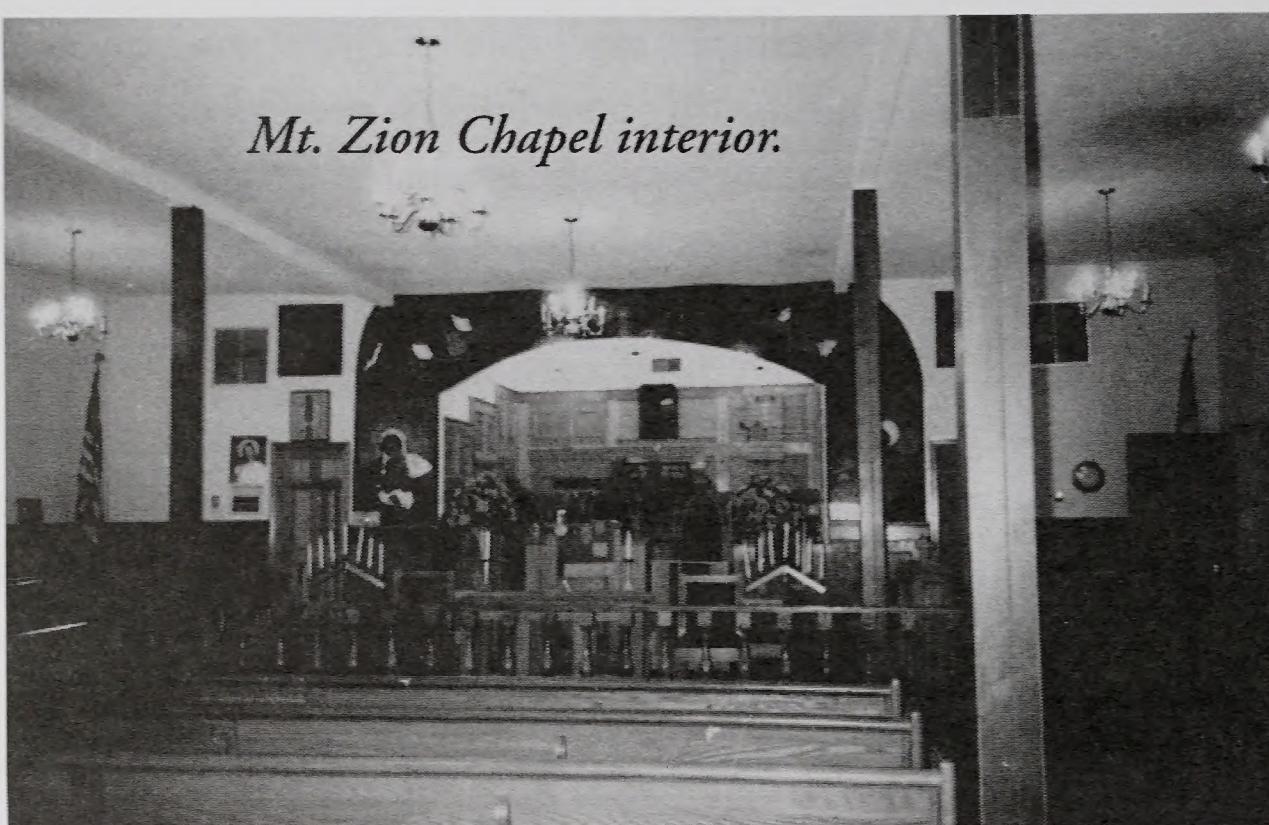
A mournful song rises from the congregation: “Remember me . . . remember me . . . remember me, God . . . O, Lord, remember . . .”

Solemn hums fill the air. The hums get louder and faster, until the whole congregation breaks into singing. Then, a thunder of stamping feet beat in rapid rhythm to chants and shouts within the church. The stomping and thumping shake the structure’s very foundation.

Up the aisles a slender man of late years moves through the center of the room. He slowly makes his way through high-stepping sisters tossing their heads with uncontrollable jerking, arms wheeling in clockwise and counterclockwise motions.



Mt. Zion Chapel interior.



As he reaches the front, a hush comes over the congregation. Slowly approaching the devotional table, the old man presses the edges of the table with curved slender fingers as he painfully bends his knees to the floor. He places his age-worn face into his half-folded hands:

“Oh, God...” he starts his testimony. “I feel alright, Lord. When I woke this morning, I said, ‘Thank you, Jesus, to see another day...’”

One of the church sisters calls out, “We don’t know how long we will be here.”

Margaret German continues, “I am grateful to be here in your number and I am happy to be here because I love singing and shouting and praying. I just love to serve the Lord.”

Sadie Smith adds her voice, “I love to sing; I love to praise the Lord, because if we never needed the Lord before, we sure do need him now. I am going to sing this song, short song, not very long. But it starts like this,”

Your grace and mercy,
 Brought me through.
 I am living this moment
 Because of you,
 I want to thank you,
 And praise you too,
 Your grace and mercy,
 Brought me through.

Your grace and mercy,
Brought me through,
I am living this moment.
Because of you,
I want to thank you,
And praise you too,
Your grace and mercy,
Brought me through.

The music is not rehearsed; it is spontaneous, group singing bent on the expression of feelings. These senior citizens come from different churches. There are no conductors. They beautifully blend their songs and testimonies, all so naturally.

Annabelle Porcher, Rebecca Chapman, Emmalina Thompson, and Carrie Jackson rise to give testimony and to sing.

Annabelle Porcher: “I am the site manager of the Awendaw Senior Center. I am a member of Mt. Nebo AME Church. Rev. Holmes is my pastor. And I just love to praise the Lord.”

Rebecca Chapman: “I belong to St. James AME. My pastor...my pastor is Reverend Gaillard. I was the Sunday school superintendent for thirty years, and I am still doing my job...and thanking God for each of you here this morning. May God bless you and may God keep us.”

Emmalina Thompson: “I am from Awendaw. My pastor is Reverend Butler, and I am in Union AME Church. And praise the Lord. I love to sing; I love singing and I love shouting too. Thank God I’m still here.”

Carrie Jackson: “I’m from Mt. Nebo Church. I thank the Lord that he wakes me up this morning in my right mind. I love to go to church and love to do the best I can between each other. And I ask the Lord to carry me through this day. And I ask this prayer in Jesus’ name.”

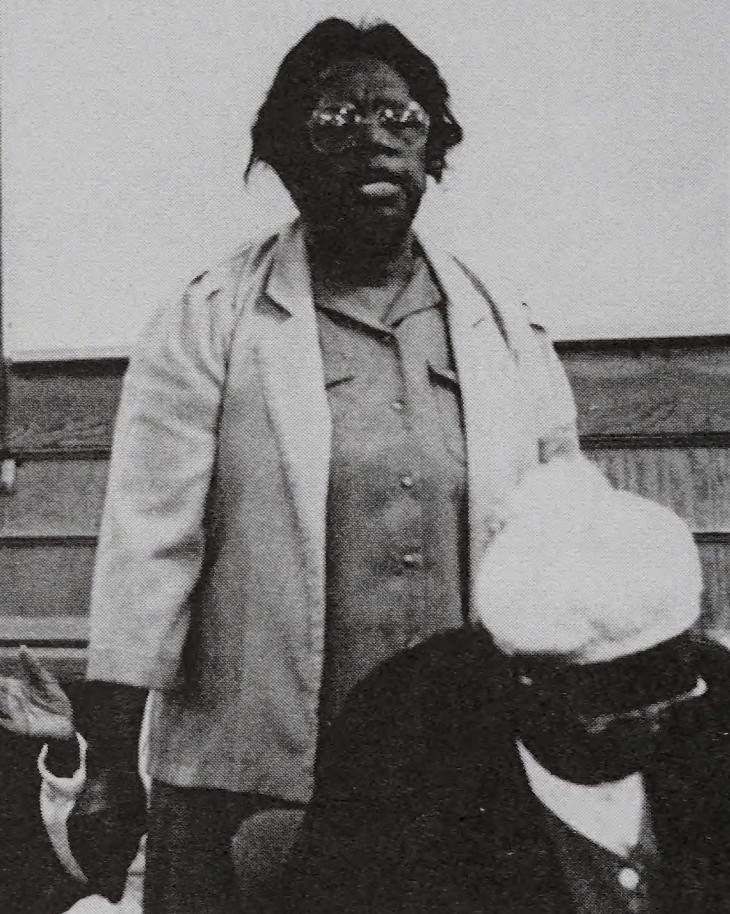
51

They join and blend their voices together to sing:

Ask me not, oh, gentle Savior,
Hear my humble cry,
Why, oh, others thou art calling,
Do not pass me by.
Singing....Savior, Savior
Hear my humble cry
Why, oh, others thou art calling.
Do not pass me by.



Participants in the prayer meeting testify and sing. The music is not rehearsed; it is spontaneous group singing bent on the expression of feelings.



52

Other members of the congregation rise to testify.

Louise Sutton: "I don't want Jesus to pass me by because I love the Lord and all his goodness. And if you do the will of the Lord, I am sure he would not pass you by."

Leonford Patterson:

I love to sing. I love to praise the Lord. I love to praise the worship songs because it blesses my soul and it tells a story. I think it blesses everyone who listens. I am just grateful to be here this morning. Last night, we had prayer service at Zion and the spirit was in the house. And when the spirit is in the house, there is joy, there's joy. There abounds joy in the presence of the Lord. And I just thank God for last night's service. One sister sang a song that really touched my heart. But, the spirit works in different ways. Sometimes a spirit will touch you through a song. Sometimes it will touch you through a word.

So, it will touch you through something somebody said. It'll touch from someone that just pats you on your back. When you feel like giving up, then someone would come along and just give you a word of encouragement or touch of encouragement. And it takes all of that to make it home while we are traveling this pilgrim journey. Something the sister sang last night was, "So Glad I'm Here." I don't know, maybe the spirit and my spirit, we coincided last night. And when the spirit of the Lord and your spirit agree, something got to happen. So this sister sang "So Glad I'm Here." And I'm going to sing it right now because that's the way I feel. I might not can sing it as good as she can, but that doesn't matter. As long as I sing it from my heart, it doesn't matter because everyone does not have the same talent. But God can use us all. Whether we got big talent, little talent, or in-between talent, because God can use it all for his glory—for his glory, not for our glory.

So glad I'm here,
So glad I'm here,
So glad I'm here,
In Jesus' name,

So glad I'm here.
So glad I'm here.
So glad I'm here.
In Jesus' name.

I'm going to pray while I'm here,
Pray while I'm here.
Pray while I'm here.
In Jesus' name.

I'm going to pray while I'm here,
Pray while I'm here.
Pray while I'm here.
In Jesus' name.

I'm going to sing while I'm here.
Sing while I'm here.
Sing while I'm here.
In Jesus' name.



I'm going to sing while I'm here.
Sing while I'm here.
Sing while I'm here.
In Jesus' name.

I'm going to love while I'm here.
Love while I'm here.
Love while I'm here.
In Jesus' name.

I'm going to love while I'm here.
Love while I'm here.
Love while I'm here.
In Jesus' name.

The Reverend Henry Smith, Jr. rises to express his love for everyone and his joy over being present:

I love to serve the Lord. I like to be in the church service. I like to be in Bible study. I like to be in Sunday school. And it is good to be in the house of the Lord at all times. That is what I love. And I'm glad to be with all of you this morning, and may the Lord ever keep and bless you. Amen. Amen.

He follows his comments with verses of "Oh, the Blood Done Sign' My Name":

Oh, the blood done sign' my name.
Oh, the blood,
Oh, the blood,
Oh, the blood,
Done sign' my name.

Oh...
Do you know him?
Do you know him?
Oh, the blood,
Done sign' my name.

Oh...I'm a witness.
I'm a witness.
Oh...well, the blood done sign' my name.

The group begins speaking in chant. They express determination to hold out to the end, and sing “Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Father.”

Prayer meeting participant Leonford Patterson rises to speak. His testimony is excellent prose poetry. The meeting’s prayers and sermons are true works of art. In Leonford Patterson’s comments the beauty of the Old Testament is blended with his prayer:

Thank you for this opportunity to be here again in the land of the living, Lord. To see another new day in Jesus’ name. Lord, you woke us up this morning, and your glory was all around us. And Lord, you allow us just to see your glory. To that we say thank you, Lord. Though we enter your gate this morning with thanksgiving, enter your court with praises, come before your presence with singing, serving you with gladness in our hearts, know that it is you that made us and not we ourselves. We are your people and the sheep of your pasture. For Lord, we want to bless your name this morning because your mercy is forever lasting to everlasting, and your truth endures to all generations. We say hallelujah to you this morning. Glory to God in the highest. God, we thank you, Lord, for what you done for us. For where you brought us from, Lord. Lord, you are Jehovah; John, our provider; and we are just glad you allow us be your servants. Lord, you made such a beautiful world, Lord, but yet you favor us, Lord. Lord, we turn our backs on you many times, Lord, but Father, you forgive, Lord. So Lord, give us a forgiving heart. He says to forgive, as we forgive others. Lord, we want to be just like you. We want to walk in your footsteps, Lord. We want to talk like you, Lord. We want to think like you. We feel for you, Lord. We want to live for you. We want to love like you. Lord we want to be holy like you. For Lord, we need your Holy Spirit. To walk with us, Lord, because Lord, we cannot do it by ourselves. Lord, we thank you for this opportunity to assemble ourselves together in sweet communion, Lord. And Lord, we do bless you and bless each other, Lord, because we need each other. Lord, we need to encourage one another. We need to love one another, Lord. We need to carry out your will. We need to be a witness, Lord. We need to live so the world



could look at us and say, "See Jesus in us." And Lord, I thank you this morning; I thank you. I'm like David this morning. I was glad when they said unto to me let's us go into the house of the Lord. Hallelujah. I thank you, Lord, for your peace and your joy that you gave us this morning. And we shall continue to give you the glory as long as breath shall last, Lord. We shall praise your name. In Jesus' name, Amen, Amen, and Amen.

Leonford Patterson then raises his voice in song and is joined by the congregation, singing "What a Mighty God We Serve":

What a mighty God we serve,
What a mighty God we serve,
He woke us up this morning,
Start me on my way,
What a mighty God we serve.

You didn't have to do it, but he did.
You didn't have to do it, but he did.
He woke me up this morning,
Start me on my way,
What a mighty God we serve.

56

Spirituals are not solo or quartet material. The jagged harmony is what makes them what they are. The lead singer, as Hurston said, "...cares nothing about pitch. The first notes just burst out and the church joins in—fired by the same inner urge. Every man trying to express himself through song. Every man for himself. Hence the harmony and disharmony, the shifting keys and broken time..." make this unique singing style, evident as the celebrants at this prayer meeting sing "I Have Jesus":

I have Jesus,
And you can't take it away from me.

I have Jesus,
And you can't take it away from me.

Oh, you can have this old body,
Just bury me in the cold clay.
I have Jesus,
And you can't take it away.

Finally, Margaret German rises again to recite an incident of conversion, telling in detail the visions seen and voices heard. The vision is a very definite part of the religious experience. In the conversion the vision is sought. The individual goes forth into waste places and by fasting and praying induces the vision:

I thank the Lord for this chance, for this opportunity, because this wasn’t promised to us. But He said, “By my grace and my mercy, I’ll take you through.” And that’s what I’m ’pending on, I’m ’pending on. If you do the will of the Lord, then He will look on; He will do wonders for you and pour you showers and showers of blessings. You may not be able to receive. So I thank God, I thank the good Lord. I thank Him for my health, my strength. Thank him, yes. I want to say today, I am a noisy Christian in my church. I do not sit quiet because I got Jesus. I was baptized in the Jordan River. Jesus takes me there in Jerusalem and brings me back over; spent fourteen days over there in Jordan. Thank you, Lord. Thank you. Very noisy, very noisy because I got Jesus. You can have this old body, but bury me in cold, cold clay.

She concludes the meeting, leading the church in the spiritual “Come Along, Let’s Ride This Train”:

Come along my friends, come along,
Get aboard,
Let’s ride this train.
Nothing on this train to lose,
Everything to gain.

Why don’t you
Come along my friends, come along,
Get aboard,
Let’s ride this train.
Nothing on this train to lose,
Everything to gain.

Why don’t you
Come along I pray, come along,
Get aboard; Let’s ride this train,
Nothing on this train to lose,
Everything to gain.



In the prayer meeting life experiences come through the songs and testimonies. They speak and sing of how God brought them through. The one taking up the hymn witnesses to the congregation, pleading for responses, firing up the church. Solemn hums fill the air. The low hums get louder and faster until the whole church starts to feel the Holy Spirit. The leader maintains the spontaneous rhythm. He directs the singing, rather than the music leading the voices. They praise the Lord through chanting, body expressions, and shouting. Stories are told of everyday experiences but told through the power of the Almighty God.

¹The prayer meeting described in this essay is an amalgamation based on observations of several prayer meetings at the Santee AME Zion Church.

Thanks to the Village Museum of McClellanville, South Carolina Arts Commission, Santee Senior Citizen Center, Zion AME Church, McKissick Museum of the University of South Carolina, and the generous contributions of the Senior Citizens of the Santee Delta. A compact disc recording of the Santee Senior Citizens' performances of hymns and spirituals, *Come Along Let's Ride This Train*, is being produced by The Village Museum, McClellanville, South Carolina.

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Bluegrass Passion: South Carolina Traditional Music Advocates Jennings and Willie Chestnut, Guy and Tina Faulk

~ *Michelle Ross*

Passion and need go hand in hand. We need clothing, shelter, and food, and in the long reach of time, a garment was woven, a first shelter constructed, and the first kill or harvest ritualized. Passion transforms the equation when a person envisions beauty within subsistence. Passion transforms a garment of protection into a fashion statement, adds architectural design and aesthetic warmth to the place of shelter, and uses herbs and spices to change foodstuff into a delectable meal. Human beings also need laughter and leisure to make for holistic development. Through human interaction or various expressive venues, a joke is told, an instrument played, and a dance is set in motion. When does need transform into passion and passion into the dynamics of tradition?

During the summer of 2000, I worked as a folklorist intern for the South Carolina Arts Commission. My supervisor requested that I review past nomination folders for the Jean Laney Harris Folk Heritage Award, given annually to outstanding tradition bearers and advocates in the state. If a folder seemed incomplete with information, I made interview arrangements with the nominee. Among the nominees was an instrument maker from Conway, Jennings Chestnut, the owner of Chestnut Mandolins. After spending a number of hours with Chestnut, I soon realized that his art of instrument making was an expression of something of the heart.

Throughout the summer, I took some time to visit with Chestnut. He told me about the Faulks, a couple in Betheria, a hamlet situated right in the middle of Francis Marion National Forest. Jennings Chestnut knew that I would want to visit them and to experience an event to which they have passionately dedicated themselves. I have made two trips so far, and on my second trip, friend and colleague Jack Doyle accompanied me, and we took the opportunity to interview the Faulks and a couple of other people. What follows is based on both interviews and illustrates well how passion motivates a need and creates a tradition.



Jennings and Willie Chestnut and Guy and Tina Faulk are active bearers of bluegrass roots music. Neither couple actively plays or performs bluegrass, but they are all dedicated advocates of the genre. Chestnut's expressive behavior begins and ends the second Saturday in May in Conway, South Carolina. He is one of two hosts and producers of "Bluegrass On The Waccamaw," an all-day concert, free to the public, and featuring up to eight bluegrass bands from the region. This year's concert featured "IIIrd Tyme Out," "Junior Sisk & Rambler's Choice," "Subject to Change," "The Bluegrass Strangers," "Sally Jones & The Sidewinders," "Mountain Heart," "Romana Church & Carolina Road," and "Jimmie Stone & The Southland Boys." As soon as the concert ends, Chestnut and silent partner Mike Battle begin to attract corporate and community sponsorship for next year's event. In fact, the mayor of Conway passed a resolution officially naming the second Saturday of May, "Bluegrass on the Waccamaw Day."

Guy and Tina Faulk have devoted nearly twenty-three years of weekly Saturdays to their Bluegrass Pickin' Parlor. They never know who will arrive and from where to play bluegrass music off a dirt road in the middle of Francis Marion National Forest. The gamut ranges from the parking lot picker to the paid and recorded professional. The audience is eclectic as well, and there is never an exchange of money among the hosts, musicians, or audience. The money placed in any of the two donation jars is applied toward utilities, bathroom supplies, and eating utensils.

There are similarities as well as subtle idiosyncratic differences in the journeys taken toward bluegrass advocacy by the Chestnuts and Faulks. Chestnut was a young boy in the post-Depression 1940s. His family was poor and Chestnut, at the age of seven, sold boiled and roasted peanuts up and down Conway's Main Street. As he stood just outside of the threshold of the pubs, Chestnut listened to the country music being played in the jukeboxes. But then around 1942, he started to notice a change in music style and sound—a sound that seemed to transport him to a more lively, energetic, happy place—and the names Bill Monroe and The Blue Grass Boys, Earl Scruggs, and Lester Flatt were associated with it. Particular instruments were also distinctive: the mandolin, guitar, banjo, fiddle, and stand-up bass.

Raised among music lovers of Ol' Time Country and Southern Gospel, Chestnut's experiences were enveloped by music. His father



played the pump organ for their church and, according to Chestnut, "My grandaddy was a circuit preacher who traveled by ox-cart wagon for the Baptist Church." As Chestnut got older, he learned to play guitar and sing along with the tunes he loved so well. Prior to becoming Chestnut Mandolins, the music store in Conway was owned by Mac Floyd and was referred to as the Conway Music Center.¹ Regional musicians such as Chestnut gathered in the back of Floyd's store to play and sing country and bluegrass music together. As Chestnut matured, his love for bluegrass matured, too. One memory Chestnut shared is when he worked for a movie theatre for eight dollars a week. He wanted a transistor radio, and he told me:

I made payments of one dollar a month until it was paid off. My favorite stations were WCKY, Cincinnati; WWVA, West Virginia; and WWOL, New Orleans. I would hide with the radio under my pillow while my family slept. I shared the room with four other brothers. The radio tubes were getting hotter by the minute, so as soon as I felt the heat, I'd pull the radio out from under the pillow, turn it off and allow it to cool down so I could listen to it again. But, I didn't mind it one bit.

61

Many bluegrass advocates have crossed Chestnut's path, functioning as guideposts and offering direction toward a lifetime commitment as a bluegrass advocate. When Chestnut was a teen-ager, he also worked with Red [William A.] White, who promoted bluegrass in the schools. Legendary Bill Monroe and Earl Scruggs were also among the visiting musicians. Chestnut explains his affiliation with White:

Fate had it that Red and I moved to the same town. We both lived in Wilmington, North Carolina, and Red hosted a bluegrass gospel music television show (WETC) for sixteen years. My band played a number of times on the bluegrass gospel show for six or seven years. I met a lot of entertainers at that time.

In the 1960s Chestnut was married with a family, and as his children got a bit older, the family traveled "all over the country to bluegrass festivals." When his oldest son was twelve, he asked for a mandolin, but Chestnut could not afford a quality instrument. Instead, he went to the home of a friend who owned an excellent mandolin and traced it on a



piece of poster board. Chestnut went home to cut out his first mandolin. According to Chestnut, "It looked terrible but sounded pretty good." When I asked what besides the lack of money motivated its construction, Chestnut's real reason came out: "My love for bluegrass music, and I didn't have the heart for anything but the best quality." That was the beginning of becoming a well-known and highly respected instrument maker.

Perfectionism and attention to details are obvious in both instrument making and the production of Bluegrass on the Waccamaw. Chestnut became so proficient in building mandolins, banjos, violins, and guitars that the Gibson guitar manufacturing company has allowed him to place their name as well as his on the guitar as a Gibson-quality instrument. A dedication to bluegrass translates into the construction of each instrument, and with humbled pride, Chestnut remarked:

I could be sitting in an audience and if someone has one of my instruments I can identify it. It's like one of my children's voices—I can tell whether it's one of my instruments or not by its sound. And once I zero in on the time period it was made in, I can tell you almost every saw cut that was made on that instrument and the weather of that day that I finally put the finish on that oak.

62

When I inquired about the character of Chestnut-instrument-owners, he got serious. He indicated that it seemed common practice for instrument makers to offer one of their instruments to professional musicians. Chestnut did not believe in that practice because their niche had already been carved out. However, he employs the principle of bringing to the forefront the awareness of bluegrass music to as many people as possible, and to make available the means to learn how to play it. For example, for ten consecutive years, Chestnut donated a Chestnut instrument in a drawing at the North Carolina Bluegrass Festival. Donations have amounted to approximately \$30,000, and his reputation has spread to such a degree that most of his instruments are sold before they are ever constructed.

As noted earlier, Chestnut traveled the country to attend festivals with his family, but eventually safety became an issue, and he felt forced to stop attending them. Drugs, alcohol and violence dominated the festival environment, but in 1981 a friend and violinmaker told Chestnut



about a drug and alcohol free festival in North Carolina. He was so grateful for it that his gesture of donating instruments began at this festival. As he told this story, tears welled up in his eyes.

I just love my music. Ten people took home a quality instrument—it didn't cost them anything. They bought a ticket to hear the music for family-style bluegrass music. They restored my faith in the music festivals, because I hated to quit going.

One of his last and influential guideposts was found in an elderly occasional visitor to the store, a dulcimer maker from East Tennessee. Dorsey Williams frequented Chestnut Mandolins to talk instruments and bluegrass. Following his death, Mike Battle, Williams' grandson, befriended Chestnut and together they organized the non-profit Bluegrass on the Waccamaw. The first event was produced in 1997 and featured eight bands. Jennings, Chestnut, and Battle are committed to feature traditional bluegrass musicians and instruments over contemporary instruments. It takes a lot of time and many volunteers for this event to maintain the success it has experienced so far.

Two of the most hard-working volunteers are Chestnut's wife, Willie, and Charleston landscaper, Gordon Small. Willie decorates inside the rustic barn where the musicians and volunteers gather for rest and food. She bakes and cooks for weeks, as well as organizes other volunteers to assist her. Willie also works every day in Chestnut Mandolins. Inside the warehouse decorative color abounds and the aroma of good southern cooking fills the air. Gordon Small maintains and leases tropical plants in Charleston, and donates six to seven hundred dollars' worth of live foliage to decorate the warehouse interior and the outdoor stage. According to Small, "We hang plants. We don't try to make it fancy or nothing, but we try to make it look country." He is also the festival photographer. In exchange, Chestnut will repair any of Small's instruments without cost. Small is one of many proud owners of several Chestnut-made instruments, including a mandolin, a banjo, and a guitar, which, according to Chestnut, is one of only four in the world. Small also has another custom-made banjo in his possession, which he refers to as the Gordon banjo.

I met Small at Guy and Tina's Bluegrass Pickin' Parlor in Bether, where he plays stand-up bass and sings for the Tri-County Bluegrass



Band. Small has been a weekly visitor to the Pickin' Parlor for a number of years and will assist Guy in offering technical advice. When Tri-County Bluegrass Band performed on stage, I heard Small emphasize Guy and Tina's generosity in making the Pickin' Parlor available for anyone to attend—again, free of charge.

"I could be sitting in an audience and if someone has one of my instruments I can identify it. It's like one of my children's voices—I can tell whether it's one of my instruments or not by its sound. And once I zero in on the time period it was made in, I can tell you almost every saw cut that was made on that instrument and the weather of that day that I finally put the finish on that oak."

~ Jennings Chestnut

64

Guy Faulk also was a boy in the 1940s, and he remembers when musicians came into the schools to perform. One of the musicians that stood out for him was Snuffy Jenkins. Jenkins was from western North Carolina, where he and other musicians like Earl Scruggs, Mack Woolbright, Rex Brooks, and Smith Hammett mastered the three-fingered banjo pickin' style, which is peculiar to that region of the state. Like Chestnut, Faulk's first experiences with music were indelible.

Although Guy says he "can't play a lick," and Tina laughed when she said, "We had us a good time trying to learn him to sing," his role in perpetuating bluegrass is obvious. Tina, however, has been playing guitar and singing since she was a child. She is the second generation in her family to play bluegrass music. Her father played bluegrass music at home and for local dances, and because he was so attached to his guitar, no one was allowed to get near it. Tina recalls with fondness the first time her father saw and heard her play. Although her father did not sit down to teach her, she learned by watching his fingering and hand movements. Tina was between six and seven years old when she learned.

I watched him play, the way he chorded and all, but I never knew how to tune it, 'cause he never let me mess with it. But every time his back was turned, Mamma would tell on me and cause me to get a whippin' (laughter), so when I caught her back turned, I'd mess with it, you know. It was always in tune,



'cause I could tell when it didn't sound right, and I'd pick that thing up and, oh, I'd strum it and I'd play that thing. For years I didn't think there was ever but "G" and "C" and "D" on a guitar.

One particular night Daddy went somewhere and he come back and I don't know who all were at the house that night, but they were asking about playin'. And Daddy said he didn't feel like playin' that night, and he sat around there for awhile, and I went in there and he had that guitar in the kitchen, and I brought it out. He had a table and set it up around the fireplace, and I set it up there and he said, "What you gonna do with that guitar?" And I said, "I brought it out there for you to play." He said, "I'm not able to play it tonight, I don't feel like playin' it." I said, "Okay, then, I'm gonna play it." And he said, "You can't play that guitar." And I said, "Yes I can." And he said, "Girl, you'd better be playin' this guitar tonight." He flipped that case open, and I picked up that guitar and strummed across it. It was just lucky it was in tuned, cause I couldn't tune it; so I strummed across it, and I just started singin'. Daddy liked to pass out; he couldn't believe it.

Anyway, I sung two or three different songs that night, and Daddy couldn't believe it. And when I got through playing he said, "Now, I really am proud of ya—I really owe you a whippin' for messin' with it," but, he said, "I can't whip ya, 'cause I'm glad that you did that, 'cause I never had the time to teach you. But you can pick up that guitar any time you want to from now on. I want you to take care of it, 'cause that was a hard thing to come by. I had to pay a lot for that."

So I did—I played it, and every time somebody'd come over, they'd play and he and I would play together. Daddy got to where he knew so much about a guitar. He could tune that guitar and play with his knife Hawaiian style. He did that a many of time. I'd play flat-top and he'd tune it down to where they got—what you call them steel guitars—I don't reckon they had 'em—he couldn't afford it, so he got to where he could just play it with his knife.

Guy and Tina also frequented bluegrass festivals. One in particular was held in Eutawville. Bands from as far away as Virginia played there.



They were influenced by the gathering of musicians and that is when Guy decided to transform a car garage to a pickin' parlor. Tina recalls the conversation between her and Guy.

"I'm tellin' you," said Guy, "what I'm gonna do with that half part of that shed. I'm decidin' I'm gonna make that a pickin' parlor out of there."

"There ain't nobody gonna come down into those woods and play no music," replied Tina.

"Well," he said, "may not, but I'll run it through with the other ones—the house band—I'll run it by them and see what they think about it."

So whenever we got home that Saturday night, we run it by them, and Austin Dew, in Summerville—he's passed away now—he said, "You got a good idea there. If you got a place, I'll tell you somethin' about these here musicians,—you build a place for them to play, they'll come from many a mile to play. And I mean, he told the truth! 'Cause they actually do that.

There were approximately one hundred people at Guy and Tina's Bluegrass Pickin' Parlor the nights I attended. The forested parking lot quickly filled with pick-up trucks and cars, and I wondered about the speed of information exchange within the bluegrass community. According to Guy, musicians and lovers of bluegrass music broadly spread the word about the Pickin' Parlor, and its participants grew in number with little effort from him and Tina. "We just open the doors on Saturday evening and people come and they keep comin'. People from all walks of life, all different professions, all areas of the United States and several foreign countries." They have had people from England, Australia, and a child mandolin player from Sweden.

News passes quickly among the members of the bluegrass community, news about upcoming events, new musicians, and hot places to jam. Jennings Chestnut heard about the Pickin' Parlor a few years ago and, as I mentioned earlier, he goes to extremes to promote the awareness of bluegrass and to recognize other dedicated people. For such people, Chestnut awards the Lifetime Commitment Award every year at Bluegrass on the Waccamaw. The Faulks were this year's recipients of the award, and Chestnut recalls Guy and Tina being moved to tears as the award was presented to them.

What motivates such dedication? Both Jennings Chestnut and Guy Faulk mentioned the happy sound of bluegrass music. Both men were



I watched him play, the way he chorded and all, but I never knew how to tune it, 'cause he never let me mess with it. But every time his back was turned ... I'd mess with it, you know. It was always in tune, 'cause I could tell when it didn't sound right, and I'd pick that thing up and, oh, I'd strum it and I'd play that thing. For years I didn't think there was ever but "G" and "C" and "D" on a guitar.

~Tina Faulk

young children during WWII, born shortly after the Great Depression—times of great suffering and sadness for the entire country. Many songs and ballads of that era tell sad sagas of loss, poverty, sickness, and death. Could a need for happiness and liveliness be so strong as to produce a happy, transporting sound found in bluegrass roots music? Jennings and Willie Chestnut, and Guy and Tina Faulk embraced the traditional happy sound of bluegrass and have made life-long commitments to maintaining a venue in which the bluegrass music tradition can reach as many people as possible.

¹ Conway Music Center is now owned by Jennings Chestnut and called Chestnut Mandolins. On one occasion, I met Mac Floyd who still frequents it. In fact, he played some fiddle for me.

67

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*A frog went a-courtin',
he did ride
A coon, a coon
Frog went a-courtin',
he did ride
Sword and pistol
by his side
A coon, a coon, a coon.*

In Search of the Frog's Raccoon

~ Julia Arrants

When I was a child, there was only one song about a frog who went courting, and I knew how to sing it. The song recounted the adventures of an intrepid amphibian who rode off on the back of a raccoon to seek the paw of his ladylove in marriage, and it went (more or less) like this:

A frog went a-courtin', he did ride
A coon, a coon
Frog went a-courtin', he did ride
Sword and pistol by his side
A coon, a coon, a coon.

He rode till he came to the mouse's den
A coon, a coon
Rode till he came to the mouse's den
And said, "Lady Mouse, will you let me in?"
A coon, a coon, a coon.

He put Lady Mouse upon his knee
A coon, a coon
He put Lady Mouse upon his knee
And said, "Lady Mouse, will you marry me?"
A coon, a coon, a coon.

"Oh, not without Uncle Rat's consent"
A coon, a coon
"Not without Uncle Rat's consent
He said I must marry the president."
A coon, a coon, a coon.



Oh, where will the weddin' supper be?
A coon, a coon
Where will the weddin' supper be?
Down in the woods in a holla tree.
A coon, a coon, a coon.

Oh, what will the weddin' supper be?
A coon, a coon
What will the weddin' supper be?
Three baked bees and a fried mosquito
A coon, a coon, a coon.

They all went ridin' down the lake
A coon, a coon
They all went ridin' down the lake
And all got swallowed by a big black snake.
A coon, a coon, a coon.

If you want to hear any more of this story,
A coon, a coon
If you want to hear any more of this story,
Just look in the big black book on the shelf.
A coon, a coon, a coon.

70

As a preschooler in Sumter, South Carolina, I was (appropriately) unaware of the history of the song. All I knew was that I had learned the song from my mother, who was born in the Cedar Creek community of Lee County, South Carolina. I held a vague assumption that it must have originated among those members of the family living alongside the Cedar Creek Swamp. The allusions to amphibians, copious insects, and ravenous reptiles did little to dispel that notion. In those early years, a bevy of boisterous cousins would sit with me at the piano in my grandparents' house in Sumter—the piano where my mother used to practice—and together we managed to disturb the adults' peace and keep the tradition alive.

The tradition, of course, was much older than the Cedar Creek homestead, and it originated far from the swamp. Versions of the song are traced to North Georgia in a collection of Appalachian folksongs (Richardson 115) and to West Virginia as early as 1916 (Cox 470). To complicate matters, one of Cox's West Virginia informants reported

that she had learned the song from cousins who had "a nurse from the South" (470), and another source reported that she had learned it from a local black woman (473).

Over 300 years before those studies, however, an early version of the song, "The Marriage of the Frogge and the Mouse," had been published in London. A similar title, "A Moste Strange Weddinge of the ffrogge and the mowse," was registered at the London Company of Stationers even earlier, in 1580 (Highland).

I do not recall having sung any variety of the song in any of my kindergarten or elementary school settings in Florence, Sumter, and York counties during the 1950s and 1960s. Neither do I recall when and where I first heard a rendering of the song outside the family. Whenever it did occur, however, I noted a glaring difference.

In this newly encountered version, the song did not specify what it was that Frog "did ride." Instead of "a coon, a coon," each verse ended with the refrain, "Uh-huh, uh-huh." I immediately surmised that the singer knew the "right" words and simply had chosen to change them. And as I encountered subsequent renderings of the song (unfortunately, long before I knew anything of the value of documentation), it became evident that "uh-huh" or "um-hmm" was the most common ending to the song.

Obviously, I concluded, all those authors and performers had known the original words to the song and had chosen to change them! And though I was still young enough to assume that there is one right way to sing any song, I was also old enough to be aware that the word "coon" had more than one meaning in my part of the world. I assumed, therefore, that someone had changed the refrain to avoid the appearance of racism. This explanation made sense to me, even into adulthood, and I followed suit, opting to "substitute" the newer refrain for the "real" one whenever I had occasion to strum the guitar for local children's groups.

Not until the spring of 1994, upon enrolling in a course entitled "Folklore in the Classroom" at the University of Georgia, did I have occasion to consider that there might be several "right" ways to sing about a frog wooing a rodent. After studying about the many varieties of folklore research, I settled on the area of folk music for my class project, and decided to track down the story of the frog.



After documenting my recollection of the version of the song I learned as a child in Sumter, I then went to my next informant, my mother. She said that she was fairly sure she had learned it from her father, who was born just across the road from her own Lee County birthplace. Beyond that, she said, she had no idea where it had come from. The version she sang to me was essentially the same as my own, with one exception: When I mentioned to her that my version of the wedding supper included "three baked bees" instead of her "three baked beans," she exclaimed, "That's not right!"

I began collecting versions of the song from friends and coworkers, and ended up with thirteen varieties of the song, or portions thereof. Informants included natives of Anderson, Sumter, Lee, and York counties in South Carolina, as well as several from Screven County, Georgia, just across the Savannah River from Barnwell County, SC. Other sources included natives of northeast Georgia, one from Iowa, and one from West Virginia, who also brought me a recording by Kentucky folksinger and composer John Jacob Niles.

72

As the collection procedure progressed, it became evident that the varieties of the song tended to follow a general storyline. Each version included some, but not necessarily all, of the following motifs, in the form of a sequence of events.

1. Frog goes courtin' or wooing, riding with or without weapon(s), or with Miss Mouse.
2. Frog arrives at Mouse's home and requests entry.
3. Mouse is involved with making thread or cloth.
4. Frog proposes marriage to Mouse.
5. Permission of Uncle Rat is needed.
6. Rat comes in wondering who has been visiting in his absence.
7. Mouse tells Rat about marriage proposal.
8. Rat finds the idea humorous but gives his blessing.
9. A dialogue takes place regarding the wedding plans.
10. A menagerie of wedding guests is listed.
11. Carnage ensues at the hands, claws, or teeth of a natural enemy.
12. Song concludes with the phrase "If you want to hear any more..."
13. Listener is told to find more information on a shelf.

All of the versions consist of two types of material: the narrative itself (the “verses”) and a refrain. As can be seen in the examples given below, some versions include patterns of repetition within the verses, while others employ a simple running narrative.

Due to my earliest recollections of the song, the refrain continued to hold my interest. The refrain tended to fall into two sorts, also evidenced in the examples below:

1. A long string of nonsense syllables.
2. Two syllables uttered once (or, in some versions, twice) within a verse and usually three times at the final line of the verse—the variety more commonly recalled by the people I interviewed.

Usually, the two-syllable refrain was of the “uh-huh” variety. But a few variations became evident:

1. “Ah-ooomph, ah-ooomph,” suggestive of a bullfrog croaking, first gathered from a co-worker born and raised in Anderson County, South Carolina.
2. A similar-sounding “ah-ooo, ah-ooo,” gathered from the informant from Iowa.
3. My own childhood refrain, “A coon, a coon.”

73

David J. Highland’s website devoted to the folksong notes that other sources suggest that the song actually was a satire alluding to a proposed marriage between Queen Elizabeth I and the Duke of Alençon, whom she called her “Frog”:

Patricia Hackett reports (*The Melody Book*, Prentice Hall, 1983) that this song was originally a satire of Queen Elizabeth’s habit of referring to her ministers by animal nicknames. She called Sir Walter Raleigh her “fish,” the French Ambassador Simier her “ape,” and the Duc d’Alençon her “frog.” In the liner notes of the LP, *Brave Boys: New England traditions in folk music* (New World Records 239, 1977), Evelyn K. Wells reports that “it [the frog/mouse ballad] is first mentioned in *The Complaynt of Scotland* (1549).” The liner notes go on to say that the 1580 version recorded with the London Company of Stationers may have been revised from the older song, at the time of the proposed (unpopular) marriage of Queen Elizabeth I to the Duc d’Alençon.



In that context, a stretch of imagination might allow for a similarity between “a coon” and the French word for “anyone” pronounced (badly) by a native speaker of English. A similar stretch might suggest an Anglicized attempt to pronounce, or even to mispronounce, “Alençon.” If the “a coon” refrain did exist prior to the song’s exportation to the New World, it is unlikely that it referred to a raccoon, since raccoons are North American animals whose very name comes from the Virginia Algonquian word *raugroughcun* or *arocoun* and first entered the English language around 1608 (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, 2001).

Not until long after the project had ended did I notice a rhyming pattern to the refrains. Except for the “uh-huh” ending, all the refrains rhyme assonantly, suggesting that they might have arisen from an origin predating any consideration of raccoons. Had I noticed that commonality, I may not have rushed quite so much to find evidence of raccoons in other varieties of the song. As it turns out, however, raccoons did show up a time or two, but never in the refrain. Within the verses that listed some more or less welcome wedding guests, some versions included a raccoon. (Despite a frog sound in the “ah-oomph” refrain, no animal names showed up in any other examples of the refrain.) This discovery made me reconsider, however reluctantly, the possibility of a racial basis for the refrain I had learned as a child. At that point I returned to my first informant, my mother: “What was it, again, that the frog rode?” I asked, to see whether she would reply, “a coon,” or “a raccoon.” She affirmed the latter, without hesitation.

It was at this point that the project was turned in and graded. It lay dormant from 1994 until 2001, when a follow-up web search failed to turn up any additional raccoons. I decided to contact those members of the Lee County branch of the family for whom I had e-mail addresses, but the response was sparse. I realized later that the most productive informants might include many without e-mail, people who were less likely to have learned the song from a children’s record, tape or compact disk, or from television.

The best tactic might be to return to the oldest possible informants, those few Cedar Creek relatives from two generations before mine. They might remember that the frog rode a raccoon, and while they’re at it, maybe they could tell me their versions of “Bill Grogan’s Goat” and fill in the words to “There’s an Old Spinning Wheel in the Parlor” and any

of the other snatches of songs that my grandfather sang off-key. They are, after all, the generation who taught my mother's generation, those about whom we will invariably say, sooner or later, "If only I had thought to ask."

But even when we do think to ask, we usually receive as many answers as we have informants. My original research yielded not one version of the song that was identical to another, even among family members. The only uniformity seems to come from the mass production methods available to more recent generations, such as children's recordings and television programming. These forms of contemporary media can be both a blessing and a bane for the songs of the past: while they ensure that the songs will not someday die with the singers, they also impose a uniformity which in its own way robs the music of the vitality which has kept it alive.

Sample Versions and Fragments

1. Recording by John Jacob Niles

Frog went courtin' an he did ride
Sword and a pistol by his side.
He rode up to Miss Mouse's door.
What he did I've hunted for.
Says, "Miss Mousie is you in?"
"Yeah Sugarfoot, I card and spin."
Nnnnnnm.

Frog went courtin' he did ride.
Hi diddle diddle diddle day.
He took that mousie on his knee.
Says "Little sugarfoot'll you marry me?"
"Oh sir now I can't do that
without the sayin's of Uncle Rat."
Old gray rat he soon come home
Sayin', "Who's been yah since I bin gone?"

Frog went courtin' he did ride.
Hi diddle diddle diddle day.
"A fine young gentleman visited me
One that ax [asked] for to marry me."



Rat just laughed a split his side
To think a mousie bein' a bride.
Next day that Rat went up to town
To buy Miss Mousie's wedding gown.

Frog went courtin' he did ride.
Hi diddle diddle diddle day.
"What's best thing for a wedding gown?"
"Ain't card hull all gray and brown?"
"What's best place for a ceremony?"
"Down in a swamp in a hollow tree."
"Tell me what that wedding cake'll be?"
"Why, two brown beans and a blackeyed pea."

Frog went courtin' he did ride.
Hi diddle diddle diddle day.
First to come was Mr. Snake.
He et up the whole wedding cake.
Then come in ol' Rastus Louse.
Dance a breakdown roun' that house.
Next to come was Major Tick,
And he et so much it made him sick.

Frog went courtin' he did ride.
Hi diddle diddle diddle day.
Then come in ol' Mr. Cat.
All them children cried out, "Scat!"
Frog was in a terrible fight,
And said to them "Good Night."
"What you'd say's Miss Mouse's lot?"
"Why, she got swallowed on the spot."
Frog went courtin' he did ride.
Hi diddle diddle diddle day.

2. Female, mid-40s, native of rural Northeast Georgia.

Text fragment:

Froggie went a-courtin' two by two
Couldn't get through the...



3. Female, 59, native of Northeast Georgia.

Text fragment:

Froggie went a-courtin' and he did ride
Um-hmm, um-hmm

Froggie went a-courtin' and he did ride
Sword and pistol by his side
Um-hmm, um-hmm, um-hmm.

(When she mentioned she could not recall the name of the lady Frog was courting, the collector said many versions call her "Lady Mouse." "No, that's not right," she said. "It was something like "Miss Molly.")

4. Female, 68, native of Anderson County.

Text fragment:

Froggie went a-wooin' he did ride
Ah-ooomp, ah-ooomp [imitation of a bullfrog]

5. Female, 60s, native of Iowa.

Text fragment:

Froggie went a-courtin' he did ride
Ah-ooo, ah-ooo

77

6. Male, 32, native of Screven County, Georgia.

Text Fragment:

Froggie went a-courtin' and he did ride
Uh-huh, uh-huh

Froggie went a-courtin' and he did ride
Uh-huh

Froggie went a-courtin' and he did ride
Totin' a sword and pistol by his side
Uh-huh, uh-huh, uh-huh.

7. Female, early 30s, native of York County.

Text fragment:

Froggie went a-courtin' and he did ride
Uh-huh

Froggie went a-courtin' and he did ride
Miss _____ by his side.



8. Female, late 30s, native of Southeast Georgia.
Text fragment:

That was the end of him and her;
There won't be tadpoles covered in fur.

9. Male, native of Southeast Georgia
Text fragment:

He rode up to Molly Mouse's door
And said, "Molly Mouse, will you be my bride?"
[pauses and seems to start over]
He said, "Molly Mouse, will you marry me
And come down and sit beside the cherry tree?"

10. Female, 70s, native of Screven County, Georgia.

Mr. Frog went a-courtin' and he did ride
Uh-huh, uh-huh
Mr. Frog went a-courtin' and he did ride
Took his pistol by his side
Uh-huh, uh-huh, uh-huh.
He rode up to Miss Mousie's door, etc.
And he knocked so hard till he made it roar.
He said, "Miss Mousie, will you let me in?
If you let me in I'll give you my pin."
He took Miss Mousie on his knee
He said, "Miss Mousie will you marry me?"
"Where will the wedding supper be?"
"Way down yonder in a hollow tree."
"What will we have for the wedding supper?"
"Blackeyed peas and bread and butter."
Mr. Frog went swimming up the lake
He got swallowed by a big black snake.

11. Female, 50s, native of Screven County, Georgia.
Text fragment:

Sword and butler by his side
Uh-huh



He rode up to Molly Mouse's side
And said, "Molly Mouse, will you be my bride?"
"What will the wedding supper be?"
"Black-eyed cornbread and black-eyed peas."

Sample Endings

1. Uh-huh, uh-huh
2. Um-hmm, um-hmm
3. Ah-ooo, ah-oo
4. Ah-ooomp, ah-ooomp
5. A coon, a coon
6. Hi diddle diddle diddle day

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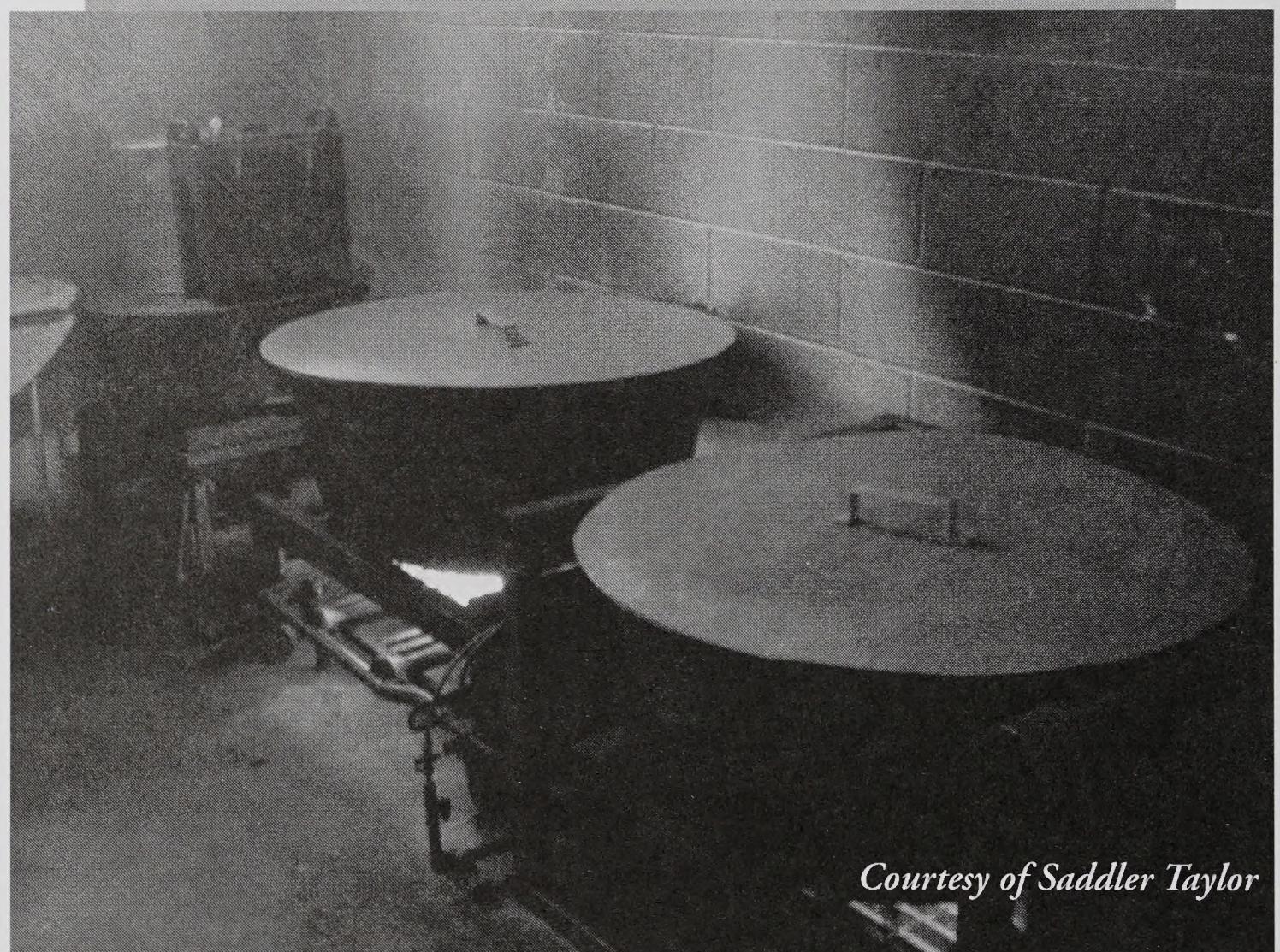
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South Carolina Hash: By the Light of the Moon

- Saddler Taylor



Courtesy of Saddler Taylor

John Shelton Reed has written, “Southern barbecue is the closest thing we have in the U.S. to Europe’s wines or cheeses; drive a hundred miles and the barbecue changes” (qtd. in Binswager and Charlton 11). With this statement, sociologist Reed presents an insightful comparison between two geographically separated and culturally distinct areas of the world. However insightful it may be, Reed’s assertion is overly simplistic in its implications. Generally speaking, Southern barbecue traditions, and subsequently the South Carolina dish, barbecue hash, certainly do have regional variants and are a part of a complex historic, economic, and social dynamic, but I would argue the regional nature of barbecue is much more highly localized than Reed acknowledges. The diversity and vast variation attendant upon barbecue, as well as other foods of congregation, is evident when the traveler moves from one neighborhood to another, much less from region to region. Replace one hundred miles with a short walk around the block and a more accurate vision of the southern barbecue—and the South Carolina barbecue hash—landscape is represented.

While barbecue in its various manifestations is a familiar Southern staple, hash is less well known outside of South Carolina. Though recipe differences are limited only by the number of preparers, hash is basically a stew containing a combination of at least one meat, usually pork or beef, and a variety of vegetables that can include potatoes, onions and corn. It is generally prepared in conjunction with beef or pork barbecue and arguably the most varied and recipe-specific aspect of hash is the sauce base, or stock. These sauce variations are endless, but usually involve ingredients like mustard, vinegar, ketchup, hot sauce, or Worcestershire sauce. Although many hashmakers use some combination of these ingredients, there are many hash recipes that call for no such sauce additions. Instead, the stock consists of nothing more than a variety of seasonings and broth. From a consumption standpoint, hash is widely regarded as a side-item, eaten on rice or grits, and occasionally as a sandwich filler.

One common denominator in regional food traditions—including not only hash but also crawfish boils in Louisiana, clambakes in Massachusetts, “yellow jacket” stews of the Eastern Cherokee, and many others—is the concept of individual variation. Both in preparation and



consumption, variation is the product of a symbiotic relationship between multiple factors, one being the dynamic and powerful influence of folk belief. Quite often, the presence of common folk belief(s) is the only similarity among the hash dishes from different regions of South Carolina. While recipes vary widely, there are ritualized aspects of hash preparation and consumption that transcend regionalism. A cursory survey would include such staples as the powerful symbolism of the cast iron stew kettle, the all-night preparation time that invariably includes group social interaction, and the general consensus that hash is to be eaten as a side item.

Additionally, one of the most significant folk beliefs associated with the preparation of hash involves the proper time to prepare the stew. Hashmakers overwhelmingly agree on the best time—by the light of the full moon. Due largely to South Carolina's agrarian roots, many widely circulated folk beliefs, customs, and superstitions are directly related to early thoughts regarding farming practices and crop growth cycles, specifically the moon and its subsequent effects on crops and harvesting. While most farmers now rely on the nightly television weather report more than they do the seminal *Farmers' Almanac* or the location of certain constellations in the night sky, these same agricultural folk beliefs have been adapted to apply to other aspects of South Carolina life, particularly the preparation of barbecue hash.

In one particular barbecue establishment, the proprietors have settled on a cooking schedule that has taken years to develop, one based on traditional moon lore. Mister Hawg's, like most South Carolina barbecue establishments, grew out of a localized family tradition—the "shade tree" cooking of so many other backyard barbecue masters. With humble beginnings in the backyard of the family homeplace, brothers Marion and Davis Robinson would help their father and grandfather cook barbecue and hash for neighbors on July 4th and other special celebratory occasions. The community response grew to such a degree that the brothers finally decided a restaurant was the next step. Soon they had an established operation on a major highway in the upper midlands region of South Carolina. Within a few years, however, they were simply overwhelmed by the demand for their barbecue and made the decision to close the restaurant. However, they experienced a powerful example of the influence of a community aesthetic.¹ Their neighbors refused to



accept that they were no longer preparing barbecue. Mister Hawg's customer base had become so loyal, large, and geographically diverse that many people heard of the shut-down after traveling long distances to acquire the local delicacy, only to find a "closed" sign hanging on the door.²

However, due to the local community's overwhelming reaction to the closing, the brothers finally decided to make barbecue again, but on their terms—a compromise would have to be reached. Clearly the community's interest lay only in the opportunity to buy the brothers' hash again, with much less interest in the reopening of the restaurant itself.³ For the brothers, the operation had to be more manageable since the restaurant "staff" consisted of the two brothers and any close friends they could talk into showing up to help. The decision was made to sell barbecue one day a month—not one weekend a month, but only one Saturday a month. And not just any Saturday, but the last Saturday of every month.

During one of our conversations I asked Marion what made them decide on this particular day. Big crowds? Work schedules? Financial considerations? Those are some of the answers I expected to hear. "You ever hear about digging post holes on the dark of the moon?"⁴ Marion asked, with a look so earnest and penetrating that there was no doubt as to the seriousness of the question. "Why, if you dig a post hole on the dark of the moon, you aren't going to have enough dirt to fill that hole back in." Other men in the room repeated the adage and applied it to other aspects of rural activity. Cutting down trees for firewood, filling up baskets and buckets with harvested crops—all of these personal experience narratives dealt with the ability to maximize one's resources when the moon is full or "on the light side."

As Marion explained, "You see, the last Saturday of the month is always going to be on the light of the moon, and our hash pots will overflow if we aren't careful." Stories began to flow about cooking hash on the "dark side" and not getting as much as you would on the night of a full moon, despite putting the same type and quantity of ingredients into the large cast iron pots. The common sense solution was to cook only when the same amount of material would produce more hash to sell to the consumer.

83

These types of personal experience narratives, or what C. W. von



Sydown classified as “memorates” (Brunvand 161), are the foundational framework of the larger folk belief. The constant repetition of these narratives, coupled with situational context, strengthens and adds credence to the folk belief. It is imperative to note that the reason the Robinson brothers operate when they do is not anomalous, not a strange blip on the traditional barbecue hash radar screen. Barbecue chefs, stew- and hashmasters alike continue to speak quite earnestly about the powerful influence the moon has on food preparation. “By the light of the moon,” “right side of the moon,” and “waxing moon” are all phrases of deep importance, verbalized from back roads to suburbia.

Folk belief, much like the larger machine of tradition, is extremely versatile and has the ability to adapt with a remarkable degree of fluidity. This is not to imply that the folk belief itself undergoes a particular change in connotative value, but instead that situational contexts for the same belief can be very different and differently influential. In this case, the one constant element, the moon, is freely interchanged with a variety of applications. The commonly regarded belief that the moon and other heavenly bodies have very real, measurable effects on agricultural activity no longer overtly dominates traditional farming circles as it did during the first half of the twentieth century. However, it would be a gross oversight to say such folk beliefs, customs, or superstitions have not been carried over into other areas of life. Again, the main construct stays the same, but the application changes. Although lunar phases are no longer used to plan crop planting cycles or harvesting times, hashmakers are quick to note that cooking by “the light of the moon” will without fail produce more stew.

The contemporary influence of traditional folk belief is quite prevalent in hashmaking circles, albeit not immediately communicated to the casual observer. One has to be allowed inside the outer layer of social pretense and clearly this invitation is not always readily proffered. Normally this reluctance to divulge such “superstitious” reasoning stems from very different motives than, say, the standard refusal to identify the secrets behind long-held family hash recipes. The latter tends to deal with a sense of pride that lends to the element of distinctiveness among peers. The former, however, deals with the realization that the particular belief might be considered foolish or ridiculous outside of a certain circle of influence.



There was something of a cathartic moment when Marion divulged the reason for the Saturday hash preparation. To some degree, he seemed a bit concerned about how disclosing these narratives would affect my impression of him. This “outsider” might possibly consider something that he held dear to be unrealistic instead.

In very short order, however, I was the one who learned three things about Marion: he cared very little about “my impression of him” and his reasons for doing barbecue when he did; he had only a cursory interest in my reaction to all the “moon talk”; and the brothers make a darn good mustard-based hash. Their system works, they are proud of their product, and have no need to justify anything to me. Normally, after any lengthy interview or day in the field, I would pack up my gear, offer deep thanks for a day well spent, and be on my way. Not so with the Robinson brothers—I have yet to leave without being offered a glass of sweet tea, a comfortable chair, and a large plate of white rice piled high with the yellow, steaming concoction straight from the iron kettle—and, of course, always under the watch of a full moon. When I finally do leave, I can’t help but sing a few verses of the song “Place in the Fire” (parody of Bill Staines’ “A Place in the Choir”):

All God’s critters got a place in the fire
Some are roasters, some are fryers
We cook ’em all as they require
And serve them up with jams or sauces,
or anything we’ve got now...

Cows and pigs make many a meal
Steak and hamburger, liver and veal,
Ribs and bacon, chops and peel,
All the pig except the squeal.

85

¹In this case, it is important to note that I use the word community in much more than a geographically localized context. I refer not only to people who still live in the local area, but also to patrons who have long since moved away but still return to Mister Hawg’s for barbecue hash. While these patrons are no longer physically a part of the community, their emotional attachment is still very strong. The hash is something of a “cultural marker” that people continue to identify with, even if they no longer live within the context of the specific tradition.



² For the community, Mister Hawg's had taken on such a powerful ritualistic role that the barbecue had become what folklorist Kathy Neustadt describes as a "traditionalizing element" (148-49). For some patrons, this ritualized treatment of hash simply revolves around significant family or communal events. Occasions like the ubiquitous birthday celebration or the Fourth of July would certainly fall in this category. However, the majority of Mister Hawg's customers do not have such a formal, calendar-specific relationship with the hash. More than just a need to have the hash a few special times throughout the year, these patrons have an intrinsic habit. This dependence is not perceived as a vice, but instead Mister Hawg's is an institution in which each customer has a certain ownership, providing not only a source of culinary and social pleasure, but immense pride. Similar to what Neustadt discovered in a Massachusetts clambake tradition, the need to consume Mister Hawg's hash had developed "formalistic traits...repetition, stylization, and a collective dimension" (148-49).

86

³ Traditions tend to have strong associative qualities that take on nothing less than ritual importance. Because of the highly sensory nature of food preparation and consumption, certain smells and/or tastes are often important triggers for individuals. For years, scholars have recognized that these feelings of "nostalgia" are directly "connected to sensory impressions and memories of the sound of language and song or the scent of foods" (Bendix 34-35). Food can be a key factor in this act of remembering or more specifically what philosopher Edward Casey has called "place memory." Casey holds that physical locations are "containers of experience" that provide powerful triggers for any number of memories (qtd. in Hayden 46). Even if experienced outside of original context, these sensory encounters can evoke deep and powerful memories of a personal, familial, or communal setting. However, while Casey states that this social memory (consumption of hash) is a product of place association, I would argue the opposite can also be the case. Place association (physical or emotional "place") can instead be the product of the cultural marker, the barbecue hash. Evidence of this can be seen throughout South Carolina where cooking locations have changed, sometimes several times—and Mister Hawg's is no exception. There seems to be little if no issue with adjusting to a new location to purchase and consume Mister Hawg's hash. Patron loyalty is not guided by



geographic location *per se*. Instead, the tenacious loyalty here rests in a twofold relationship between “who” and “what.” First, who made the hash and second, what hash is being consumed. In other words, it must be Mister Hawg’s hash, made by Davis and Marion. Clearly, the acts of preparation and consumption are the memory triggers, not the location of this particular act of preparation or consumption.

⁴ Information gathered through a combination of several different telephone and field interviews beginning in March of 2001.

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Let Every Morsel Be Good to You: Reflections on My South Carolina Food Traditions

- Ervena Faulkner

[Editors' note: Ervena Faulkner is a food columnist for the Beaufort Gazette and a community scholar in Port Royal. She offered the following comments on her food traditions and their social significance during the first annual meeting of the South Carolina Traditional Arts Network in Columbia on March 10, 2001. What follows is an edited version of Ms. Faulkner's comments. As Ms. Faulkner notes, food traditions serve multiple functions for all social groups. These traditions remind us of favorite celebrations, especially with family and close friends; they remind us of times past; and they reinforce future social ties as they are passed from generation to generation. Food traditions are so powerful because they capture memories through multiple senses: the sight of juice dripping from a ham fresh from the oven; the smell of biscuits on a Sunday morning; the spicy taste of barbecue ribs; the feel of warm corn bread in one's hand; and the comforting sounds of women's voices coming from the kitchen on Thanksgiving morning, or the equally refreshing sounds of men's voices joking around the hash pot. Food traditions reinforce many other traditional values, and thus are extremely significant in all our lives.]

Food is always exciting, was always exciting. When I grew up, my mother was a great cook, and because she was such a great cook, I never wanted to cook. Mama didn't always work, but when she was at home, she would always fix grits, bacon, eggs, biscuits—and biscuits were always home made.

When it came time for me to cook, I couldn't do the biscuits. If you didn't eat them right off the oven, then you could pop them like a rock. So, my daddy said, "Come on, let's get these biscuits straight." So every Saturday morning was my time. And every Saturday morning my sister and my mama talked about those hard rocks, and he said, "Come on (he called me "bright eyes") you're gonna make it." And so I did. I learned how to make biscuits real good.

Then here comes the Hungry Jack stuff. So now I got married, and Daddy came down to Beaufort one time, and I fixed these Hungry Jack biscuits. And he said, "What's that you gave me to eat this morning?" I said, "Daddy, that's the type out of the can."

He said, "All those years I worked with you on these biscuits, you're gonna feed me outta the can?" He said, "Don't do that anymore." So I have a little cousin who is nine years old, and when he comes down from Virginia and I fix biscuits, he says, "Cousin Ervena, these are better than Hardee's, better than Burger King and ain't nothing like the ones we have here." So I do good biscuits.

Then there was always dinner and whatever Mama fixed for dinner. Whatever was for lunch was for dinner. And you always had bread. You always had rice.

And there were celebrations. Fourth of July was always big. This was before everyone started doing their own ribs. There are always ribs and hash. And so Daddy would have to leave home early in the morning because if we didn't leave early to get our ribs, we would come back with a lot of fat. And Mama would always fuss. You had to go get in that line and get your ribs. And we'd have ribs and we'd have hash and rice.

When I moved to Beaufort, there is no such thing as hash. Everybody does ribs. And so now I talk about hash there, and they say, "What's that? We don't eat hash." Low-country people don't eat hash. So I always come back to Columbia to the same place my Daddy went and get my hash because I have to have hash and rice. There are certain traditions you keep.



Then of course, you know, at Easter you always had a ham. Good baked ham. You always had candy yams. The ones that taste like sugar dripping.

Sunday dinners were always the same. You always had fried chicken and this was before I learned that cheese was a substitute. If you have macaroni and cheese, you don't have to have chicken. But we had fried chicken, macaroni and cheese, potato salad, rice and gravy. And then we had either our greens or our string beans. I've eaten enough string beans...if I have to eat another string bean in my life... Because string beans were there every, every Sunday. And Mama loved string beans like I love collards, but she loved string beans. But that was always our dinner.

And then on Thanksgiving, that was a time you always had the roasted turkey. And you always had the dressing and the gravy, and Mama made good, good dressing. When it is my time to make the dressing, my children say, "Mama, let Gran' Anna make it, please, 'cause you don't make it good." But now since Mama is deceased, it's my time to do it. But she would always share the food. So when she fixed the food, there were some women who were just as old as Mama, just as sick as she was, but she had us carrying dinners out to them and so we continued that tradition.

Then at Christmas time, there's the turkey, there's the chicken, there's the roast, and there's, of course, rice, and there's the gravy. And then for New Year's day, and the time you stay at home, there is a typical dinner, simple to make: black-eye peas, collard greens, and corn bread. That's it. You ate that all day long: black-eye peas, collard greens, and corn bread. When I got to the little country, they did it a bit different. The meal has to be done at midnight. And their meal is hoppin' John, collard greens, and then they add a lot of little stuff. So since I don't know how to cook hoppin' John, my girlfriends bring hoppin' John over so my family has that part to add to it. They think it's a shame that I don't do that, but I love for them to fix it for me. So that is why I don't learn how to do that.

Then another celebration we always had was birthdays. You always had a birthday party and that party came with, most of the time, fried chicken, rice and gravy, and potato salad; but you always had a cake. But then after that, there was the homemade ice cream. Mama would make the custard and Daddy and I would do the



churning and wait for that dasher to come out because there is nothing as good as having ice cream off the dasher. So that was good.

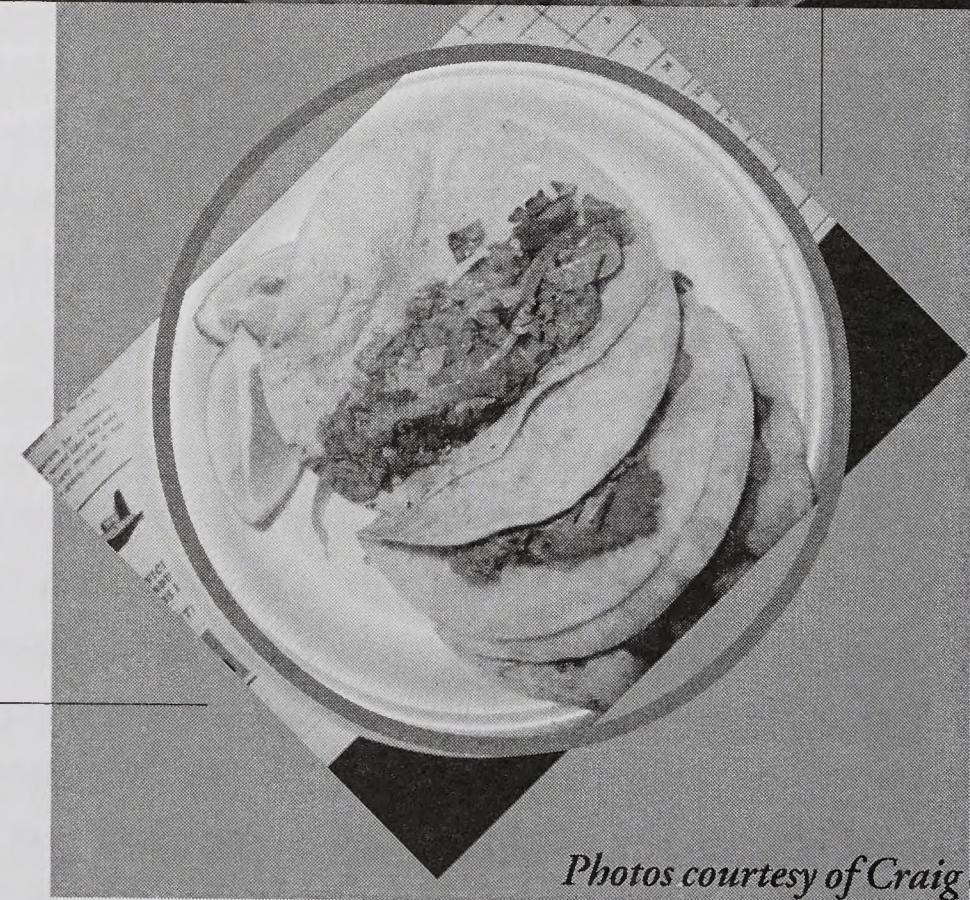
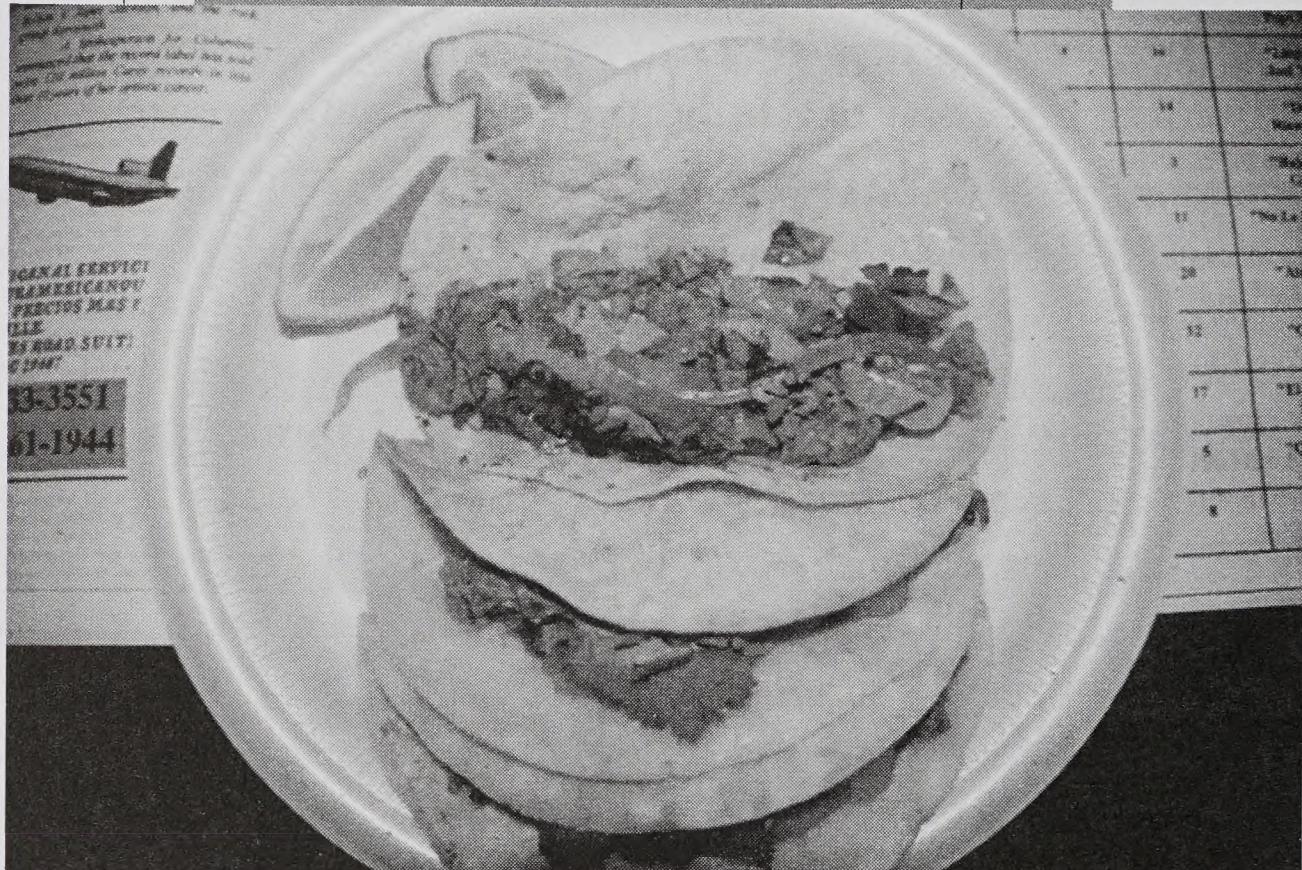
Then there were the rites of passage in our lives. At graduation, your mama would fix all the kinds of food you liked and invite the older people in the community over because it was a celebration and because the child was either coming out of high school, or out of college. And that was always fun. Then there were weddings. Whatever everybody liked to eat, you always had a little bit more—but little fancier stuff. So you had the sandwiches, and good chicken salad sandwiches, and good sandwiches with ham.

Then there is a time that our communities—it was not really a celebration, but a way of family and friends coming together—when we have the wakes. I've attended more wakes in the past two years than I would ever want to attend in my life. I've lost a lot of folk, but my family lives, seems to be, to ripe old ages. In fact, two years ago, we just buried my ninety-two year old aunt, and then in November my mother was eighty-nine. So I think I'm going for a hundred and twenty if my Daddy is ninety and he is still sharp. So I have to cut down on my pork, but he eats pork every day, and he is doing good. So at the wakes, there is always a lot of food being brought in because families sit and eat. So you would have the chicken, you would have the collard greens coming, you would have the string beans, you would have the potato salad, you would have macaroni and cheese. That seems to be a favorite among African Americans. I don't eat it because I've only developed a taste for cheese for like thirty years, but I know it's always in my house. Always macaroni and cheese—and Daddy says that I don't cook it enough. I said, "Well, 'cause you know I don't eat it. That's why I don't let you guys eat it either."

And then at funerals, used to be a time that families would come to the person's house and eat the food, but now we've gone up to another notch. We have moved to the "East Side" [moved up in the world] now, so we have the church to give the repast after a funeral. And that is always either chicken or turkey, rice and gravy, and string beans again. So you have to find the good foods and eat; and then when you chew, let every morsel be good to you because food is the source of a lot of things for us. It makes us who we are. It makes us feel good about what we are doing.

Taquería El Perico: Mexican Food and Identity in Columbia, South Carolina

~ *Craig Stinson*



Photos courtesy of Craig Stinson

Taquería El Perico is located in what is considered by many as the commercial district for emerging communities in the city of Columbia, South Carolina. Decker Boulevard, which runs from the main entrance of a local U.S. Army base to the famous U.S. Highway 1, is home to numerous locally-owned businesses that cater to the large populations of Korean, Mexican, Central American, Filipino, and immigrants from Caribbean nations who reside in the city. El Perico is located in a strip mall beside a check cashing service and El Mexicano Store, a Mexican grocery store.

I was able to spend a few days at Taquería El Perico to talk with Soledad Esquivel and Isabel Mendoza about the foods that are prepared there, their customers from the local Mexican community, and the role that their restaurant plays in the local community. Soledad Esquivel and Isabel Mendoza are the principal employees at Taquería El Perico. They arrive early in the morning to prepare the day's food, attend to the afternoon rush of customers, and possibly rest for a while in the late afternoon before the evening flurry of activity. Isabel Mendoza is from the lush state of Veracruz on the Gulf Coast east of Mexico City. Soledad journeyed to Columbia from her hometown of Parrál, Chihuahua, just two hours from the state's capital and nine hours from the U.S. border. "*Es norteña, la mujer*" ("The woman's a northerner."), jokes Isabel, immediately invoking what is to be a theme of Mexican regionality and diversity that courses through our conversations.

The *taquería* is very different from the proliferation of Mexican restaurants that have been established throughout South Carolina. Mexican restaurants serve principally a non-Mexican customer base. The *taquería*, which roughly translates into "taco stand," is of a different nature:

Craig Stinson (CS): So, who are the people that come here to the taco stand to eat?

Isabel Mendoza (IM): To eat? Almost all Mexicans.

Soledad Esquivel (SE): The majority, yeah.

IM: There are Mexicans, Puerto Ricans. From Guatemala. Honduras.

SE: But the majority are from Mexico.

IM: One hundred percent, almost. The majority are Mexicans.



Demographic changes in South Carolina mirror those in the rest of the United States. Immigration in recent years has been at record levels. The majority of immigrants now residing in South Carolina come from Latin America (Mexico first, then Colombia and Central American nations), the Philippines, India and Southeast Asian nations, particularly Korea, Thailand, and China. Immigrants to the United States have very personal reasons for making the difficult and painful decision to leave everything and move to another nation. For the vast majority of individuals from Mexico now residing in South Carolina, the reason is simply economic:

CS: How are things in Mexico right now?

IM: No, Mexico is very... Well, in Mexico there are no jobs.

SE: And the ones there are...they really...they pay very little.

IM: Like, they don't pay well. They don't earn anything. It's like, they earn 200 pesos a week [Roughly \$20.00 U.S.—author's note].

CS: 200 pesos?!

IM: What good does that do you? And a killer job.

SE: Exactly.

IM: It's like, the workers in the fields. These are the ones they pay less. They earn thirty pesos a day.

SE: It's hard work.

IM: And they work a lot.

SE: For the campesinos we say, "When the sun goes down, you can stop working."

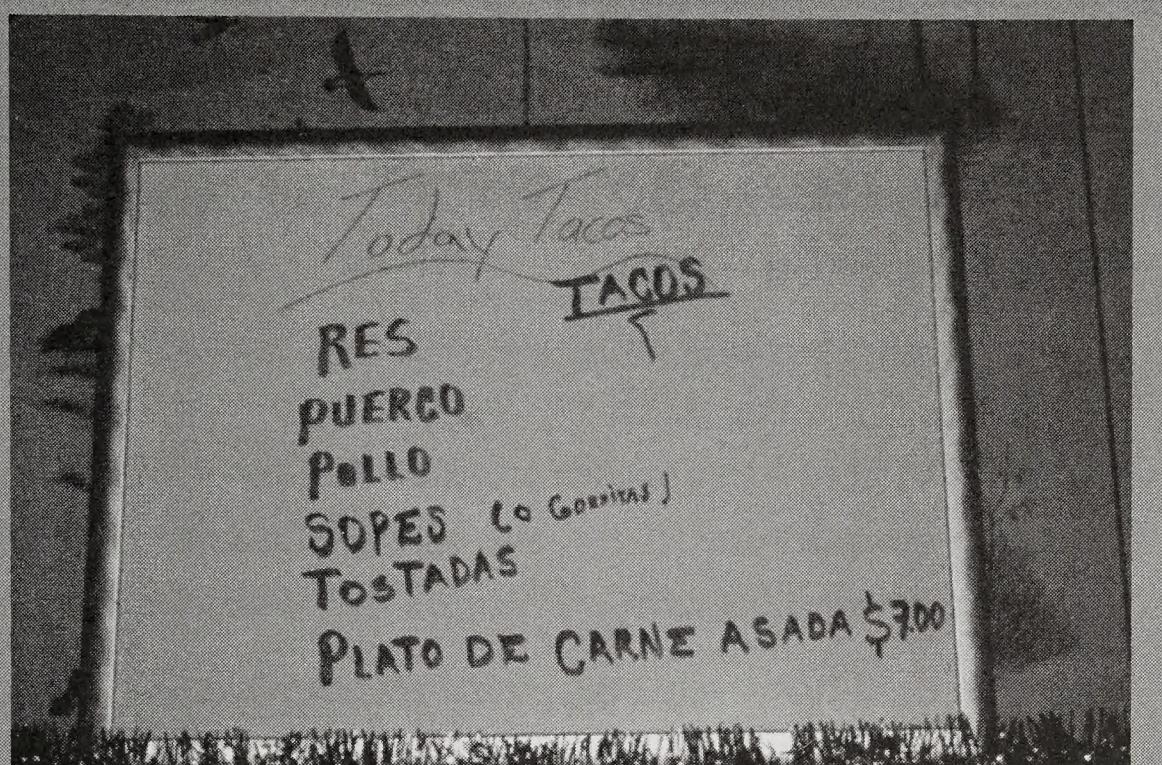
IM: It's a lot of time. And imagine, these poor people, bad food, and don't earn anything. For those reasons, that's why they don't eat well. You tell me if it's not better for them to come here... Here, at least, you can earn a little money, but you spend it. But it's worth it to send it back there.

SE: It works.

IM: The money's worth something.

In Mexico, the past twenty years have been especially difficult for individuals on the lower end of the economic scale. Government corruption and inefficiency, periodic devaluation in currency, and new rules for international trade have caused mass migrations to Mexican

Daily taco menu at Taquería El Perico.



urban centers, into northern border factories, and into the United States in search of work:

IM: For example, where I'm from, the town is losing all its people. They've all come to the United States.

CS: Men and women, too?

IM: Men and women.

SE: Not just there. It's like that everywhere.

Out of economic necessity, many families have become dependent on their family members, the majority of whom are men, working in the United States who send remittances:

IM: Oh yeah, only men come here to eat. [to Soledad] Right? There are few women.

CS: And why only men?

IM: It's because, normally there are a lot that come to work. But they don't have their wives here... Their wives aren't here. They stay in Mexico. The men come to work.

CS: And they're sending money?

IM: Yeah, they are.

The importance of a *taquería* for the local Mexican community cannot be understated. It is a place where individuals from a similar cultural background can feel free to converse about the day's events,



talk about home, their jobs, what is happening on the weekend, or watch Spanish language programs on the television that is playing in the corner. Each person can empathize with others around him, because almost everyone is in South Carolina for the same reason. The *taquería* reconstructs a familiar context from home:

SE: The taco is common in Mexico. Taco stands everywhere.
Yeah, that's the truth.

IM: Where I live, there are taco stands—for example, the entire boulevard, the entire street [motions with hands to Decker Boulevard]... There's a taco stand in every corner.

Interestingly however, compared to *taquerías* in Mexico, El Perico offers a limited menu of beef, pork, and chicken tacos. In *taquerías* across Mexico, the offerings are much more diverse and include meats that are specific to certain geographic areas. I asked both Soledad and Isabel what *taquerías* in their hometowns offered, and when I mentioned my familiarity with cuisine in northern Mexico, Soledad acknowledged observations and elaborated:

96 CS: What do they put inside them [tacos]?

SE: Barbecue...

IM: They make them from [cow] head.

SE: Barbecue, head. Like they call it, the *birria*. It's almost the same...

CS: *Birria* is a soup, right?

IM: *Birria* is a stew.

CS: Well, when I lived in Torreon (in northern Mexico), they had things like tripe and tongue and...

SE: There you go. That's from the head. Okay. Okay. The tongue, the brains, that's from the head...

CS: It's good.

SE: Well, yeah, they're real good.

Mexico is a very large nation that spans deserts, lush tropical forests, heavily industrialized areas, world-famous beaches, and rural areas. The diversity in geographic regions translates into an incredible array of local dishes and traditional foodways. Like South Carolinians talking about barbecue or hash, food traditions for Mexicans evoke a sharp rivalry and divisiveness that can be fun, or can simply exasperate an already



sensitive situation. The menu at Taquería El Perico has been made to quietly sidestep these regional food differences and invoke what could be considered a pan-Mexican offering. The menu is something that all of their customers can relate to immediately without feeling that a particular region or food tradition is being promoted above another:

CS: The type of food here, then, what...

SE: It's all Mexican food.

CS: But, what is Mexican food like?

IM: Here, the only thing we sell are tacos.

SE: Tacos, *picadas*, and tostadas. And *carne asada*.

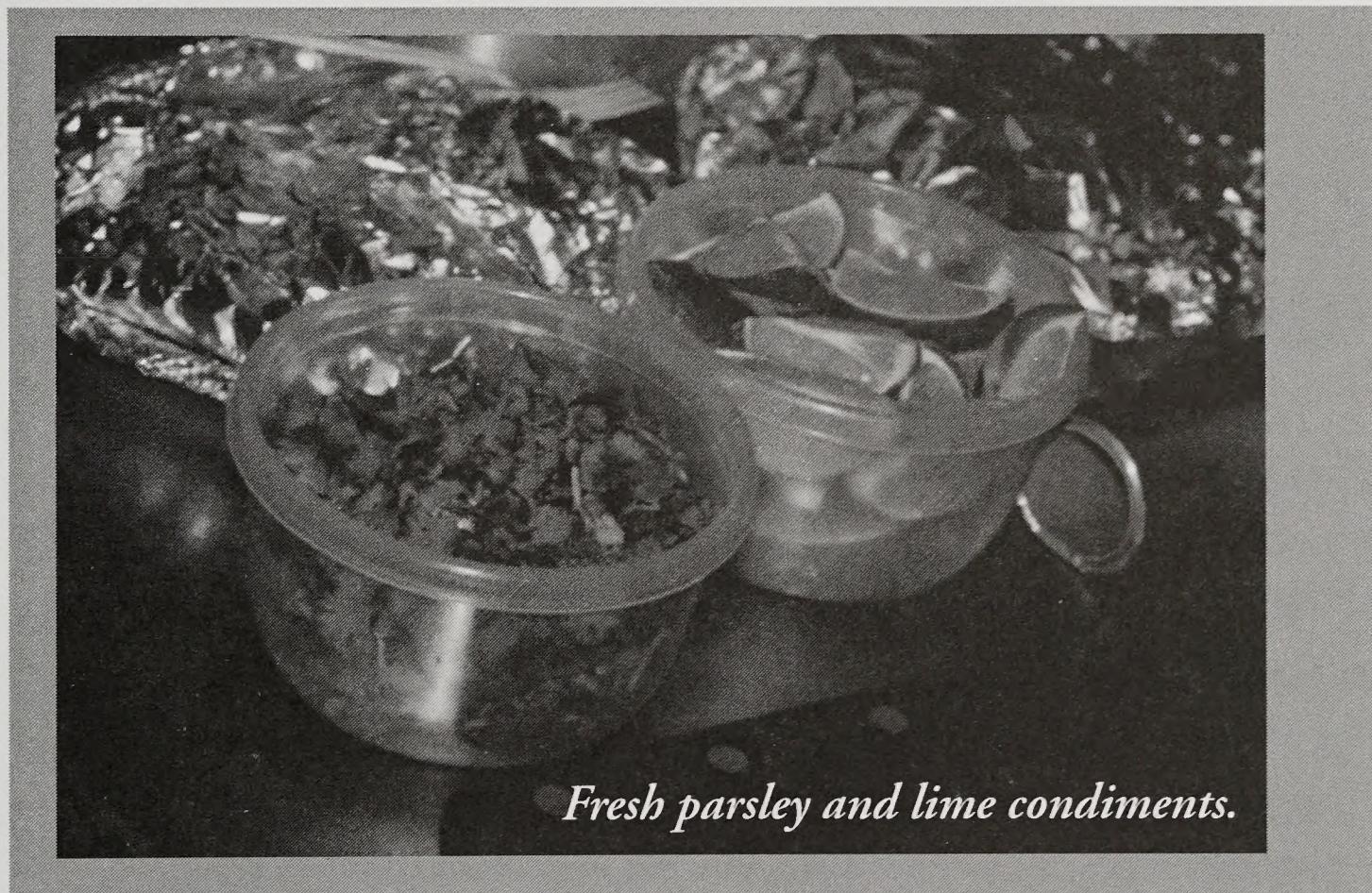
IM: That's it.

Almost instinctively, Soledad continues: "Clearly there are many kinds of Mexican dishes." Isabel agrees.

SE: What we sell here is for parties. Taco, with the *gordita*.

CS: Tostadas.

SE: And *carne asada*.



97

I asked both Soledad and Isabel about regionalism in food traditions:

CS: Look, Veracruz is, it's not in the South, but it's close to the D.F. [Federal District, Mexico City] right? And Chihuahua is in the North. So, dishes are going to be different.



SE: Yeah, everyone has their way, their style, to prepare a dish. Their tradition. Everywhere has their tradition.

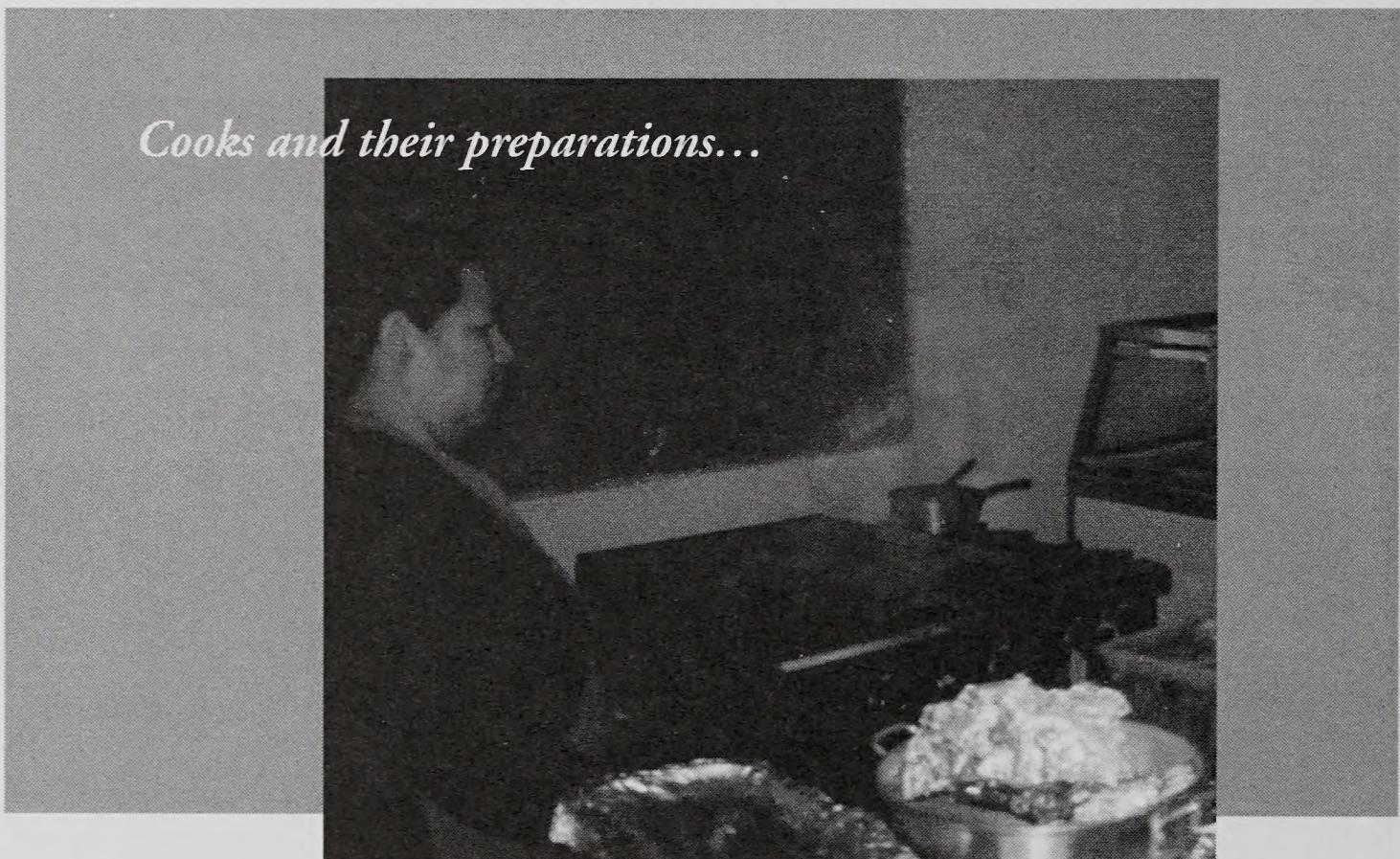
IM: What's the favorite dish in Chihuahua?

SE: For example, say, the enchiladas. There are *chiles rellenos*. Various, you know? There are different dishes. It's not exactly one type of food. There are various.

CS: Then, what's a dish that's typical there [in Veracruz]?

IM: Typical there is seafood. Like, fish. Fried fish. Seafood soup. Ceviche. Oysters.

Cooks and their preparations...



98

SE: Oh, that sounds good.

IM: [laughs] Did it make you hungry?

In another part of the conversation, the issue of regional food differences came up again:

IM: In Mexico we only eat black beans. I don't like these [points to the refried pinto beans].

SE: You don't like them?

IM: No. They've got another flavor. I'm used to...

SE: Well, yeah. That's it.

CS: In Veracruz they use [black beans], but in other parts, too?

IM: In Mexico, there are people who only use [black beans].

SE: In Chihuahua, it's only these [pinto]. You see black beans

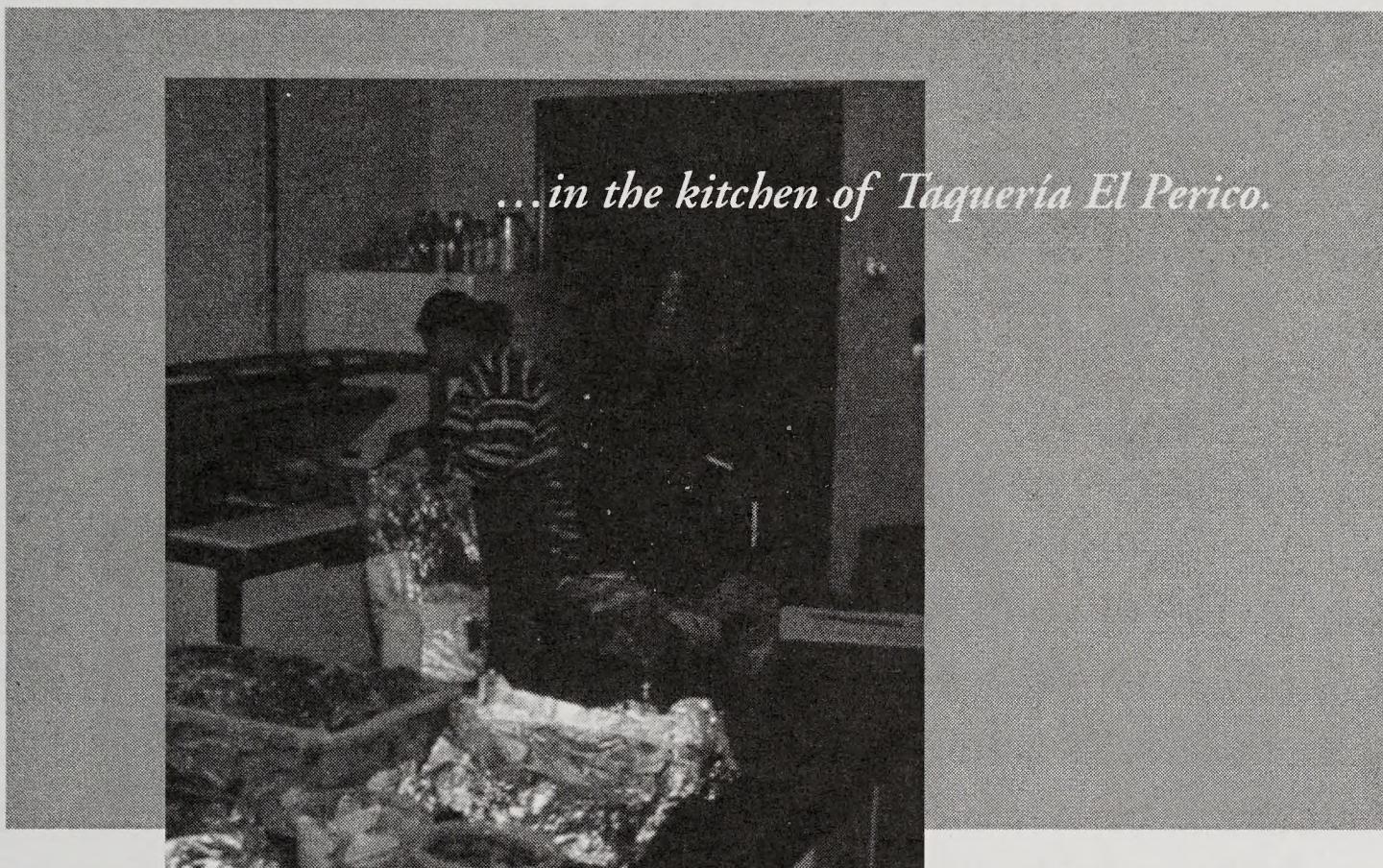


sometimes, but not much.

CS: In the south, do they use black beans?

SE: I would imagine so.

IM: Yeah. That's where they grow them. They grow corn. They grow chile. They grow cucumber. All that. My father grew a lot of pineapple. Corn. *Chile*. *Chile rosa* and jalepeño. And beans.



99

These issues of diversity within Mexican communities in South Carolina and the construction of a pan-Mexican identity here in the state are also manifest in decisions of where individuals choose to eat:

CS: Almost everyone that eats here, they're working and they're sending money. . .

IM: They have their wives there [in Mexico]. . . . It's hard. Why do you think they eat out? Or they want to eat something that tastes good, from their land. Because they don't have anyone to do it for them. That's why they look around.

The conversation continued with Soledad and Isabel commenting on other Mexican restaurants in Columbia, particularly a popular eatery called Monterey:



IM: But they don't taste the same. Like, it's not because I'm saying they're not good. It's that in certain restaurants it's, I don't know. I worked in Monterey, and I didn't like the food there.

CS: Why not?

IM: Because almost everything is made from all, for example, the tomatoes are canned. Almost everything already has chemicals and here, no. Everything is natural. Here, nothing is artificial, like they say. Here it's all natural.

CS: Here you have cilantro...

IM: Everything. Everything.

SE: Cilantro, onion, tomato, *chile*. Everything, but natural. Nothing packaged. We don't buy anything in a can.

CS: But it tastes different? It tastes better?

IM: It tastes better.

SE: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Because it doesn't have as many chemicals that they put in them. The tortilla is natural. One hundred percent natural.

100

Soledad and Isabel addressed the quality of the food without talking about the social context or the ways in which Monterey and other local restaurants cater to the palate of South Carolinians. I asked if the food could be considered "Tex-Mex," which is another way of saying "Americanized":

IM: They have a lot of Americans that eat there, so they make it in that style. But it's not Mexican anymore.

SE: If you're going to pay your money, you're going to eat somewhere you like. How are you going to buy something just because it's there? Just because you're hungry?

IM: For example, the enchiladas they make at Monterey are all tomato sauce from a can. The only thing they do is dip the tortilla and put the tomato sauce on it. Those are not enchiladas. For us, enchiladas are with mole.

With this statement, Isabel moved back into issues of regional diversity of food traditions in Mexico. The conversation moved to appropriate methods of making mole.



CS: In Veracruz?

IM: Yeah.

CS: In Chihuahua, too?

SE: From *chile colorado*. Everyone make mole according to their style. Everyone has their style [laughs]... But it's true. For example, there are many things there that are similar to ours. And there are many dishes that are totally different.

As with any community, it is difficult to portray a large number of people with diverse regional backgrounds as a cohesive group. The emerging Mexican community in South Carolina is the same way. While many individuals have come to South Carolina for the same reason, internal diversity in terms of regional backgrounds, food traditions, manners of worship, music traditions, ethnic backgrounds, and a variety of other characteristics make it difficult to talk of a community in the singular form. It may be better to speak of communities that have come together to address a new cultural context and will add to the cultural mosaic of what is South Carolina. Community identity is constantly in flux and will change in relation to contemporary contexts and issues. While the *taquería* serves as a powerful force for location of group identity through pan-Mexican food traditions, we should look through this location as dynamic and ever changing in relation to what constitutes an emerging South Carolinian identity for individuals of Mexican heritage. What will emerge is part of the process of immigration that countless other communities have been through here in South Carolina. In terms of food, I'm hoping for *taquitos con té dulce*.

Taquería El Perico: la comida mexicana y la identidad en Colombia, Carolina del Sur

– traducción por Michael Schinasi e Ingrid Vernon

La Taquería El Perico está ubicada en una zona que muchas personas consideran el distrito comercial para comunidades emergentes en la ciudad de Colombia en la Carolina del Sur. El bulevar Decker, que pasa desde la entrada principal de una base militar de los Estados Unidos hasta una carretera famosa—U.S. Highway 1 es donde residen numerosos negocios locales que abastecen a una población grande de Coreanos, Mexicanos, Centroamericanos, Filipinos e inmigrantes de naciones caribeñas que viven en la ciudad. El Perico está situado en la alameda cerca de una tienda donde se cambian cheques por efectivo y la tienda El Mexicano, un almacén mexicano.

Tuve la oportunidad de pasar unos días en la taquería El Perico y hablar con Soledad Esquivel e Isabel Mendoza sobre las comidas que se preparan allí, los clientes de la comunidad local mexicana, y el papel que juega el restaurante en la comunidad local. Soledad Esquivel e Isabel Mendoza son las empleadas principales de la taquería El Perico. Llegan temprano por la mañana para preparar la comida del día, atender a la muchedumbre de clientes al mediodía, y posiblemente tomar la siesta antes de la actividad agitada más tarde por la tarde. Isabel Mendoza es del estado fértil de Veracruz en la costa del golfo al este de la ciudad de México. Soledad viajó a Colombia de su pueblo natal de Parral, Chihuahua, solamente dos horas de la capital del estado y nueve horas de la frontera de Los Estados Unidos. “Es norteña, la mujer”, bromea Isabel, inmediatamente invocando lo que va a ser el tema del regionalismo y la diversidad mexicanos que surge repetidamente en nuestras conversaciones.

La taquería es muy distinta de los restaurantes mexicanos que se han proliferado en toda la Carolina del Sur. Los restaurantes mexicanos les sirven comida principalmente a los que no son mexicanos. La taquería, palabra que significa «taco stand», es de una naturaleza distinta:

Craig Stinson (CS): Entonces, ¿quiénes son las personas que vienen a la Taquería a comer?

Isabel Mendoza (IM): ¿Para comer? Casi puro mexicano.

Soledad Esquivel (SE): La mayoría, sí.

IM: Hay mexicanos, puertorriqueños, de Guatemala, Honduras.

SE: Pero la mayoría son de México.

IM: Cien por ciento, casi. La mayoría son mexicanos.

Los cambios demográficos en la Carolina del Sur reflejan los de otras partes de los Estados Unidos. La inmigración en años recientes ha llegado a niveles históricos. La mayoría de los inmigrantes que ahora vive en la Carolina del Sur es de la América Latina (Méjico primero, después Colombia y las naciones centroamericanas), las Islas Filipinas, India, las naciones asiáticas del sudeste, especialmente Corea, Tailandia, y China. Los inmigrantes a los Estados Unidos tienen motivos particulares para tomar la decisión difícil y penosa de dejar todo y trasladarse a otra nación. Para la mayoría de la gente de Méjico que ahora vive en la Carolina del Sur, el motivo es simplemente económico:

CS: ¿Cómo está Méjico ahorita?

IM: No, Méjico está muy... Bueno, en Méjico, no hay trabajo.

SE: Lo que hay, está bien... pagan muy poco.

IM: O sea, no pagan bien. No ganan bien. Por decir, ganan doscientos pesos por semana.

CS: ¿¡Doscientos pesos?!?

IM: ¿Para qué sirven doscientos pesos? Y un trabajo bien matado.

SE: Exacto.

IM: Por decir, los campesinos que siembran. Esos son los menos pagados. Ganan treinta pesos diarios.

SE: Cuesta mucho el trabajo.

IM: Y trabajan mucho.

SE: Es trabajo de campesinos, decimos, "Poniéndose el sol a trabajar."

IM: Es mucho tiempo. Imagínate, esa pobre gente, mal comida y no ganan bien. Por lo mismo, que no comen bien. Dígame si no van a venirse mejor p'acá. Buscar otro... Acá, por lo menos. Aquí también, así como se gana dinero, se gasta. Pero en mandándolo p'allá si vale.



SE: Aprovecha.

IM: O sea, que, sirve el dinero.

En México, los últimos veinte años han sido especialmente difíciles para la gente que se encuentra en la capa inferior de la sociedad. La corrupción del gobierno y la ineficacia, la devaluación periódica de la moneda, las nuevas reglas del comercio internacional han causado migraciones masivas a centros urbanos de México, a las fábricas fronterizas del norte, y a Los Estados Unidos en busca de trabajo:

IM: Al menos, donde yo vivo, el pueblo se está quedando sin gente. Toda la gente se ha venido para Los Estados Unidos.

CS: ¿Hombres y mujeres también?

IM: Hombres y mujeres.

SE: No [queda] nada más allí. Así en todas partes...

Por la necesidad económica, muchas familias han llegado a depender de sus parientes, la mayoría de los cuáles son hombres que trabajan en los Estados Unidos que les mandan dinero:

IM: Ah sí, puros hombres vienen a comer. [a Soledad] ¿Verdad? Hay pocas mujeres.

CS: ¿Y por qué puros hombres?

IM: Es que, por lo regular aquí hay muchos que vienen a trabajar. Pero no tienen a sus esposas aquí... Sus esposas no las tienen aquí. Se quedan en México. Ellos se vienen a trabajar.

CS: ¿Y están mandando dinero?

IM: Sí, están.

La importancia de la taquería para la comunidad mexicana local no debe disminuirse. Es un lugar donde la gente de antecedentes similares se siente libre para conversar de los eventos diarios, hablar del hogar, sus trabajos, lo que sucede los fines de semana, o mirar programas en lengua española en la televisión que está en el rincón. Cada persona le puede sentir empatía a su prójimo, porque casi todos los latinos en la Carolina del Sur están aquí por la misma razón. La taquería reconstituye un contexto familiar de la patria:

SE: El taco es usual en México. Taquerías por donde quieras. Sí, es la verdad.

IM: Donde yo vivo, son taquerías allí por decir, todo el bulevar,

toda esta calle [mociona con las manos al bulevar Decker]...
Hay una taquería en cada esquina.

Interesantemente, sin embargo, comparado a las taquerías de México, El Perico tiene un menú que se limita a tacos de res, cerdo, y pollo. En las taquerías por todo México, lo que se ofrece es más diverso e incluye carnes que son más propias de ciertas áreas geográficas. Pregunté a las dos, Soledad e Isabel, qué ofrecen las taquerías de su pueblo natal, y cuando mencioné mi familiaridad con la comida del norte de México, Soledad notó lo que había dicho y elaboró:

CS: ¿[En México,] qué tienen para poner adentro?

SE: Barbacoa...

IM: Hacen de cabeza.

SE: De barbacoa, de cabeza. Como dicen, la birria. Por decir, es casi igual...

CS: Birria es una sopa, ¿verdad?

IM: Birria es caldo.

CS: Bueno, yo sé que cuando viví en Torreón, tenía cosas como tripa, lengua y...

SE: Ándele. Esto es de la cabeza. Bueno. Bueno. La lengua. Los sesos son de la cabeza...

CS: Está rico.

SE: Pues, sí, son muy buenas.

México es una nación muy grande que se extiende sobre desiertos, abundantes bosques tropicales, zonas altamente industrializadas, playas mundiales famosas, y áreas rurales. La diversidad de las regiones geográficas da lugar a una formación increíble de platos locales y tradicionales. Igual a los nativos de la Carolina del Sur cuando hablan de barbacoa o picadillo, la evocación de los diversos platos tradicionales de México produce rivalidades y divisiones notables que pueden ser divertidas, o que simplemente exasperan una situación ya sensible. El menú de la taquería El Perico ha evitado estas diferencias regionales invocando lo que puede considerarse un ofrecimiento panamericano. El menú es algo al que todos sus clientes pueden relacionarse inmediatamente sin sentir que una región particular o tradición de comida se promociona más que otra:



CS: El tipo de comida aquí, entonces, que...

SE: Es pura comida mexicana.

CS: Pero, ¿cómo es la comida mexicana?

IM: Aquí, únicamente lo que se venden son tacos.

SE: Tacos, picadas, y tostadas. Y carne asada.

IM: Es lo único.

Casi instintivamente, Soledad continúa: «Claro, hay muchas clases de comida mexicana». Isabel se pone de acuerdo.

SE: Aquí es lo que vendemos en fiestas. Taco, con la gordita.

CS: Tostadas.

SE: Y la carne asada.

Pregunté a las dos, Soledad e Isabel, sobre el regionalismo en las tradiciones de comida:

SE: Sí, cada quien tiene su forma, su estilo de preparar un platillo.

Su tradición. Cada parte tiene su tradición.

IM: El platillo favorito de Chihuahua, ¿cuál es?

SE: Por ejemplo, por decir, las enchiladas. Están los chiles rellenos. Varía, ¿verdad? Son diferentes platillos. No es exactamente una comida. Hay varios.

CS: ¿Entonces, cuál es un plato típico de allá?

IM: Típico de allí son mariscos. O sea, pescado. Pescado frito, sopa de mariscos, el cebiche, los ostiones.

SE: Ay, que rico.

IM: [se ríe] ¿Ya te dió ganas?

En otra parte de la conversación, la cuestión de las diferencias de las comidas regionales se presentó otra vez:

IM: Como nosotros allá en México, puro frijoles negros. Estos no me gustan. [indica los frijoles refritos]

SE: ¿No te gustan?

IM: No. Tienen otro sabor. Ya estoy acostumbrado...

SE: Pues, sí. Más bien.

CS: Bueno, en Veracruz los usan, pero en otras partes también.

IM: En México, hay gente que nada más los usan [negros].

SE: En Chihuahua, puro de esos [pintos]. Los negros así se ven de repente, pero no mucho.

CS: ¿En el sur, usan frijoles negros?



SE: Imagino que sí.

IM: Sí. Por allí los siembran. Siembran maíz, siembran chile, siembran pepino. Todo eso. Al menos, mi papá sembraba mucha piña, maíz, chile, chile rosa y jalepeño y frijoles.

Estas cuestiones de diversidad entre comunidades mexicanas en la Carolina del Sur y la construcción de la identidad pan-mexicana aquí en el estado también se manifiestan en las decisiones de los individuos sobre donde optar por comer:

CS: Casi todas las personas que comen aquí, están trabajando y están mandando dinero...

IM: Tienen sus esposas allá... Está duro. Porque creen que comen en la calle, o quieren comer algo sabroso, de su tierra. Porque no tienen quién se los haga. Por eso ellos buscan.

La conversación continúa con Soledad e Isabel comentando otros restaurantes mexicanos en Colombia, particularmente un restaurante popular que se llama Monterrey:

CS: Pero hay otros restaurantes mexicanos aquí en Colombia.

IM: Pero no saben igual. O sea, no es porque yo digo que son muy buenos. Es que en cierto restaurante es, no sé. Yo trabajé en el Monterrey, y a mí no me gustaba la comida allí.

CS: ¿Por qué?

IM: Porque casi todo está hecho de pura, por decir el tomate es de lata. Casi todo es ya con química y aquí no. Todo es natural. Aquí no hay nada artificial, como dicen. Aquí es puro natural.

CS: Tienen aquí cilantro...

IM: Todo. Todo.

SE: Cilantro, cebolla, tomate, chile. Todo, pero todo natural. Nada empaquetado. No compramos nada de lata.

CS: ¿Pero sabe diferente? ¿Sabe mejor?

IM: Sabe mejor.

SE: Claro, claro. Porque ya no tiene tantos [productos] químicos que les echan. La tortilla es natural. Natural cien por ciento

Soledad e Isabel abordaron el tema de la calidad de la comida sin hablar sobre el contexto social o maneras en que Monterrey y otros restaurantes abastecen las paletas de la gente de la Carolina del Sur.



Pregunté si la comida puede considerarse «Tex-Mex», que es otra manera de decir «americanizada»:

IM: Como allí viene mucha gente americana a comer, ya cocinan en el estilo de acá. Ya no es mexicano.

SE: Es que vas a pagar tu dinero, para ir a comer algo que le agrade. ¿Cómo va a comprar algo no más porque allí está? ¿No más porque tiene hambre? Pues, tampoco.

IM: Al menos, las enchiladas que hacen allí en el Monterrey es pura salsa de tomate, es de lata. Nada más meten la tortilla y echan la salsa de tomate así. Esas no son enchiladas. Para nosotros las enchiladas son de mole.

Con esta declaración, Isabel volvió a hablar de los problemas de la diversidad regional de tradiciones de la comida en México. La conversación se movió a los métodos apropiados de hacer mole:

CS: ¿En Veracruz?

IM: Sí.

CS: ¿En Chihuahua también?

SE: De chile colorado. Uno hace su mole a su estilo. Cada quien tiene su estilo [se ríe]... Pero es cierto. Por ejemplo, allí hay muchas cosas que son similares a las de nosotros. Y hay muchos platos que son totalmente diferentes.

108

Igual a toda comunidad, es muy difícil retratar a un gran número de personas con diversos orígenes regionales como si fuera un solo grupo cohesivo. La comunidad mexicana que está emergiendo en la Carolina del Sur es de la misma manera. Mientras muchos individuos han llegado a la Carolina del Sur por la misma razón, por su diversidad interna respecto a sus antecedentes regionales, tradiciones de la comida, maneras de adoración, tradiciones musicales, fondos étnicos, y una variedad de otras características se hace muy difícil hablar de una comunidad en forma singular. Sería mejor hablar de las comunidades que se han unido a enfrentarse con un contexto de cultura nueva y aportarle algo al mosaico cultural de lo que es la Carolina del Sur. La identidad de la comunidad está constantemente en flujo y se cambiará con relación a los contextos y cuestiones contemporáneos. A la vez que la taquería sirve como una fuerza muy poderosa para ubicar la identidad del grupo a través de las tradiciones de la comida pan-mexicana, debemos considerar este lugar



en un sentido dinámico, siempre cambiando con relación a lo que constituye una identidad emergente en la Carolina del Sur para individuos de origen mexicano. Lo que efectivamente resultará de esto es parte del proceso de inmigración que otras numerosas comunidades han experimentado en la Carolina del Sur. Respeto a la comida, yo espero tomar taquitos y té dulce.

Cultural Tourism in South Carolina

- Lisa Randle

110

Cultural tourism is a way of attracting visitors interested in experiencing unique places, traditions, art forms, celebrations, history, and people. Cultural tourism makes a significant contribution to a community's economic development. It involves local residents, cultural institutions, and the travel and tourism industry. Communities have developed successful programs linking the arts, history, and tourism. Other related markets include agri-tourism and eco-tourism. Agri-tourism is based on a particular agriculture such as tobacco, cotton, rice, indigo, etc. Eco-tourism is based on natural features such as marshes or forests or activities that take place in these natural settings such as bird watching, hiking on nature trails, shelling, and fishing. Cultural tourism provides an excellent opportunity to connect traditional arts and cultures with community development and promotes new partnerships on the local, regional, state, and national level. Combining cultural traditional properties with cultural tourism would create a greater appreciation of and support for South Carolina's cultural assets. In this paper, I explore how the travel and tourism industry and various state arts and cultural agencies should collaboratively preserve and document South Carolina's traditional cultural properties through cultural tourism.

Historic and cultural attractions preserve our state and national heritage. I would argue that it is the tourism industry that must learn more about traditional cultural properties, and those who ascribe significance to them, in order to recognize that they are an important part of tourism. Visitors desire to experience the "real America," which can best be done through inclusion of traditional cultural property and its people at historic sites, museums, etc.

The perception that "the state has a very heavy-handed approach when it comes to telling communities what's good for them" needs to be remedied. It is vital to evaluate traditional cultural properties from

the standpoint of those who ascribe their significance. This means avoiding ethnocentrism, viewing the world and the people in it (and in this case, their cultural properties) only from the point of view of one's own culture.

Cultural communities should be involved as much as possible in the planning stage, from the beginning. The definition of cultural community is often a vague one. Sometimes it can be equivalent to a town, but often it crosses geographical borders. Some traditional cultural properties are well known to the residents of an area. However, most must be identified through a systematic study. With proactive planning, significant properties or areas likely to contain traditional cultural properties can be identified before projects are planned. Urban areas are more likely to contain properties of significance to ethnic groups while rural areas are more likely to contain properties of significance to native communities. In rural areas, the landscape/natural environment contributes to the traditional cultural properties and values of the people who settled there. Tourism should be designed in such a way that it does not threaten the culture and sites that attract the visitors. Each community must decide for itself what kind of tourism and how many tourists it wants to have, and what it wants to share with visitors to minimize adverse impacts on local residents and cultural resources.

The tourism planning process should recognize and encourage the local culture. Expertise and knowledge provided by local cultural organizations and cultural specialists can help identify "real places" by providing accurate interpretation and assuring the continued vitality of the community's residents and culture. Cultural institutions are a primary resource for developing regional or thematic packages for tourists. The tourism industry should work with local groups in articulating the local community's heritage and image.

Educating and training the tourism professional should be a high priority of communities with regard to their culture. Cultural specialists and community members must be aware of the interpretation of their communities by the tourism industry. It is important that accurate information is used in developing, promoting, and interpreting a community's traditional culture. The tourism industry should join with cultural organizations in promoting the diversity and uniqueness of place, educating travelers about the culture of the community, and learning to



appreciate the value of another's culture and their cultural institutions. As a part of education, the industry should be aware of the need to preserve natural, historic, and cultural resources by minimizing the impacts of visitation.

South Carolina has a diversity of historic buildings, structures, landscapes, and archaeological sites ranging from prehistoric Indian campgrounds to Civil Rights Movement sites, from grand mansions to vernacular farmhouses, from textile mill towns to railroad towns, from rice fields to tobacco fields. Many citizens, private organizations, local governments, and state and federal agencies realize that historic preservation enhances the quality of life in our communities and state. South Carolina is home for individuals of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. This includes minority racial and ethnic communities of African Americans, Native Indians, Asian Americans, and Latinos (Hispanics). These individuals and their communities add to the richness of our state's cultural life.

In an effort to address these diversities, the South Carolina Arts Commission (SCAC) is exploring the idea of "Cultural Democracy"—"Democracy" in the sense that efforts and decisions are equitably made to reflect all of the citizens of our state, and "Cultural" meaning that in order to address democratic principles, we need to be informed and sensitive to the ways local communities and local cultural systems nurture and promote artistic forms.

Despite growing public awareness, South Carolina has lost and continues to lose her historic buildings, structures, landscapes, and archaeological sites at an alarming rate through the development of farmland and open space. On February 3, 2000, South Carolina Governor Jim Hodges issued an executive order creating the Governor's Task Force on Historic Preservation and Heritage Tourism. One of the purposes of the Task Force is to recommend how to better coordinate and enhance the state's existing preservation programs. The Governor, through the work of the Task Force, has recognized a need to determine how to coordinate South Carolina's preservation programs into a supportive, comprehensive approach toward the maximization of the state's resources. The Task Force concluded that organizations and agencies must work together. Public/private partnerships can implement cooperative programs and projects to ensure preservation of traditional



cultural properties. It is important that urban, rural, regional, and tribal planning agencies and the private sector see that cultural issues are addressed in the comprehensive planning process. The list of participants should include regional tourism organizations, councils of government, South Carolina Educational Television (SCETV), the South Carolina Arts Commission (SCAC), the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (PRT), the South Carolina Department of Archives and History (SCDAH), the South Carolina Department of Education (DOE), the State Museum, the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources ([DNR] Heritage Trust), the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology (SCIAA), and the various related nonprofit organizations scattered across the state.

In South Carolina, as well as elsewhere in America, visitors are drawn to cities like Charleston, the beaches of Myrtle Beach, mountain resorts and whitewater rafting, theme parks, and national parks. Visitors are also attracted to communities that are unique in the way of their heritage, culture, architecture, and scenery. Traditional crafts and ethnic customs can enhance their value beyond the boundaries of the local community.

Some South Carolina communities are rich in architectural style, e.g., Charleston, Georgetown, Beaufort, Camden and Cheraw. Other South Carolina communities reflect a cultural "flavor," including Native Americans, e.g., Cherokee, Oconee, Edisto, and Saluda. The Low-country suggests sweetgrass baskets, "Frogmore Stew," oyster roasts, and shrimp. The Upcountry suggests split oak baskets, barbecue, and clogging. Several cities have prospered because of their ethnic cultural makeup, e.g., French Huguenot, German, Mennonite, African American, and Anglo European. Salt marshes, an ocean inlet, Cape Romain Wildlife Refuge, and Francis Marion National Forest surround the small fishing village of McClellanville. This area could be promoted as an example of eco-tourism. The towns of Ninety Six and Camden feature Revolutionary War battle sites. Edgefield is the birthplace of ten South Carolina governors and of Edgefield pottery. Not only are these sites historic, but they also contain potentially vital archaeological information and continuing and emergent folklore and folklife traditions.

South Carolina hosts over 400 festivals and events annually. Major events like Spoleto, Southeastern Wildlife Exposition, Salley's Chitlin' Strut, MCI Heritage Golf Classic, Family Circle Tennis Tournament,



Arthur Smith Fishing Tournament, and the Carolina Cup draw hundreds of thousands of people. Camden and Aiken feature horse racing. Orangeburg has an annual Grand American Coon Hunt. Small communities have their special festivals and events that focus on local cultural traditions.

Local cultural groups can enhance local history programs by presenting an accurate portrayal of important events and persons significant to their culture. Some of the more popular events include Revolutionary War and Civil War battles that are re-enacted annually. The Catawba Nation has an annual Pow-wow at their reservation in York County each November.

The natural, historic, and cultural resources of our state are a major asset to travel and tourism. Not every community is suited for tourism, nor is tourism suitable for every community. The survival of traditional cultural resources becomes more and more important as people seek the "real America." Cultural agencies, on all levels, should be involved in preserving and promoting traditional cultural properties to encourage the accurate interpretation of the cultural expressions of communities.

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Contributors to this issue

Julia Arrants, a native of Sumter, is a licensed counselor in private practice near Savannah. A graduate of Winthrop and the University of Georgia, she developed an interest in folk music and storytelling through a postgraduate class in folklore. She is the author of “The Dancing Christmas Tree,” a ghost story set in Lee County and published in *The Solstice Evergreen* by Sheryl A. Karas (Aslan Publishing, 1998).

John M. Coggeshall received his Ph.D. in anthropology from Southern Illinois University in 1984 and has taught at Clemson University since 1988. Professor Coggeshall has published several books, including *Carolina Piedmont Country* (U Press of Mississippi, 1996), and has conducted research on the impact of development on coastal South Carolina communities and the relationship between “authentic” folklife traditions and heritage tourism.

Stephen Criswell received his Ph.D. in English with a concentration in Folklore from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and is currently an Assistant Professor of English at Benedict College in Columbia. Dr. Criswell is the President of the South Carolina Traditional Arts Network and the Editor of *Folklore in the Carolinas*, the newsletter of the North Carolina Folklore Society. He is currently conducting an NEH-supported study of African American family reunions.

Vennie Deas-Moore is best known for her folklore work throughout South Carolina. She is a photographer/writer on the South Carolina Arts Commission’s Artist Roster, and is nationally credited for her work in Southern culture. Vennie was born in McClellanville, grew up in nearby Charleston, and now lives and works in the state capital, Columbia. She still considers the village of McClellanville her “home.” Her mother lives there and the family has strong ties to the area.

Ervena Faulkner is a food columnist in Port Royal and a graduate of the South Carolina Arts Commission's Institute for Community Scholars.

Charles Joyner is the Burroughs Distinguished Professor of Southern History and Culture at Coastal Carolina University. He is the author of *Down By the Riverside* and *Shared Traditions*.

Paul Matheny is the Curator of Art at the South Carolina State Museum. He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Winthrop University in 1996. Exhibits he has curated include "Plywood and Tin: 32 Outsider Artists from Virginia to Louisiana," Rock Hill Center for the Arts; "Still Worth Keeping in South Carolina: Planes, Chairs and Superstars," Winthrop University Galleries; "Stuff Worth Keeping: Folk Art Objects from the Permanent Collection," Museum of York County; and "The Difference in Dirt: South Carolina Pottery and Ceramic Arts," Museum of York County.

Gale McKinley, of Neals Creek Community in Anderson County, near Belton, has been designated as a Master Artist in the tradition of split oak basket making by the South Carolina Arts Commission. Gale, a third generation basket maker, has won awards in juried art competitions for her baskets, and was awarded a 2000 Apprenticeship Initiative Grant from the South Carolina Arts Commission to teach her son the craft.

Fran Gardner Perry is an assistant professor of art at the University of South Carolina–Lancaster. She is also an artist working in fiber-based mixed media.

Lisa Randle holds a Masters degree in Public History from the University of South Carolina. She is currently pursuing a Masters Certificate in Cultural Resource Management from USC. She is employed at the South Carolina Arts Commission.

Donald Roper is a life-long resident of the textile mill village of Piedmont, where he still works for the local mill. He is well known as a local historian and has presented many programs to clubs, schools, and other groups, as well as several papers at the annual meeting of the South Carolina Historical Association. His "Cotton Mill Toys" program, a favorite of school groups, demonstrates his childhood playthings made from bits and pieces of discarded material from the cotton mill. He also played textile sports and has gone from "bat boy to keeper of the stories."



Michelle Ross is a recent graduate of Western Kentucky University's Folk Studies graduate program, where she concentrated in Public Folklore. As an intern, Ross worked with Craig Stinson at the South Carolina Arts Commission, during which time he invited her to be included in the early development of the South Carolina Traditional Arts Network (SCTAN). She is SCTAN's executive director and also assists Jack Doyle, director of the South Carolina Center for Oral Narration at the University of South Carolina at Sumter.

Craig Stinson is the Director of Folklife and Traditional Arts and Diversity Initiatives at the South Carolina Arts Commission. Originally from Wilmington, North Carolina, Craig's earliest memories of South Carolina were making runs to the state line to buy fireworks. He has lived in Columbia since April 1999.

Saddler Taylor is the Curator of Folklife and Research at the University of South Carolina's McKissick Museum. A native South Carolinian, Taylor received his M.A. in Folklore from Western Kentucky University, with a special focus on traditional foodways and historic preservation. In 2000 Taylor returned to his roots in South Carolina to raise a family and eat lots of good fried food. Interested in the relationship between communal foodways and community identity, Taylor continues to explore Southern barbecue and stew-making traditions throughout the Southeast.

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organized and
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arts of South
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